MR. PAT'S LITTLE GIRL

MARY F. LEONARD

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"HOW SWEET THE BREATH BENEATH THE HILL OF SHARON'S LOVELY ROSE."

Mr. Pat's Little Girl

A Story of the Arden Foresters

BY

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHASE EMERSON

W. A. WILDE COMPANY

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MR. PAT'S LITTLE GIRL.

TO

A. E. F.

IN LOVING MEMORY

THIS STORY IS DEDICATED

BY HER NIECE

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	THINGS BEGIN TO HAPPEN	11
	"A magician most profound in his art."	
II.	ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HEDGE . . .	21
	"Give me leave to speak my mind."	
III.	FRIENDSHIP	32
	"True it is that we have seen better days."	
IV.	AN UNQUIET MORNING	41
	"You amaze me, ladies!"	
V.	MAURICE	50
	"The stubbornness of fortune."	
VI.	PUZZLES	62
	"How weary are my spirits."	
VII.	THE MAGICIAN MAKES TEA	74
	"If that love or gold *Can in this place buy entertainment,* *Bring us where we may rest ourselves and feed."*	
VIII.	"TO MEET ROSALIND"	85
	"Put you in your best array."	
IX.	THE LOST RING	100
	"Wear this for me."	
X.	CELIA	110
	"One out of suits with fortune."	
XI.	MAKING FRIENDS	118
	"Is not that neighborly?"	
XII.	THE GILPIN PLACE	127
	"This is the Forest of Arden."	
XIII.	IN PATRICIA'S ARBOR	141
	"O, how full of briers is this working-day world."	
XIV.	THE ARDEN FORESTERS	147
	"Like the old Robin Hood of England."	

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
XV.	A New Member	158
	"In the circle of this forest."	
XVI.	Reciprocity	171
	"Take upon command what we have."	
XVII.	A New Comrade	182
	"I know you are a gentleman of good conceit."	
XVIII.	An Imprisoned Maiden	198
	"The house doth keep itself, *There's none within."*	
XIX.	Old Acquaintance	212
	"And there begins my sadness."	
XX.	The Spinet	222
	"Thou art not for the fashion of these times."	
XXI.	"Under the Greenwood Tree" . . .	229
	"Must you then be proud and pitiless?"	
XXII.	Circumstantial Evidence	242
	"I sometimes do believe and sometimes do not."	
XXIII.	The Detective	254
	"'Twas I, but 'tis not I."	
XXIV.	At the Auction	265
	"Assuredly the thing is to be sold."	
XXV.	Questions	276
	"They asked one another the reason."	
XXVI.	The President	284
	"— And good in everything."	
XXVII.	Old Enemies	294
	"Kindness nobler ever than revenge."	
XXVIII.	Better than Dreams	298
	"I like this place."	
XXIX.	At the Magician's	308
	"I would have you."	
XXX.	Oak Leaves	319
	"Bid me farewell."	

ILLUSTRATIONS.

		PAGE
"'How sweet the breath beneath the hill Of Sharon's lovely rose'" . .	*Frontispiece*	12
"Do you know Miss Betty?"		78
"Looking up, he discovered his visitors" . . .		153
"They crossed over to speak to her"		193
"She chose a chest of drawers"		268

Mr. Pat's Little Girl.

CHAPTER FIRST.

THINGS BEGIN TO HAPPEN.

"A magician most profound in his art."

IT was Sunday afternoon. The griffins on the doorstep stared straight before them with an expression of utter indifference; the feathery foliage of the white birch swayed gently back and forth; the peonies lifted their crimson heads airily; the snowball bush bent under the weight of its white blooms till it swept the grass; the fountain splashed softly.

"'By cool Siloam's shady rill
How fair the lily grows,'"

Rosalind chanted dreamily.

Grandmamma had given her the hymn book, telling her to choose a hymn and commit it to memory, and as she turned the pages this had caught her eye and pleased her fancy.

"It sounds like the Forest of Arden," she said, leaning back on the garden bench and shutting her eyes.

"'How sweet the breath beneath the hill
Of Sharon's lovely rose.'"

She swung her foot in time to the rhythm. She was not sure whether a rill was a fountain or a stream, so she decided, as there was no dictionary convenient, to think of it as like the creek where it crossed the road at the foot of Red Hill.

Again she looked at the book; skipping a stanza, she read: —

"'By cool Siloam's shady rill
The lily must decay;
The rose that blooms beneath the hill
Must shortly pass away.'"

The melancholy of this was interesting; at the same time it reminded her that she was lonely. After repeating, "Must shortly pass away," her eyes unexpectedly filled with tears.

"Now I am not going to cry," she said sternly, and by way of carrying out this resolve she again closed her eyes tight. It was desperately hard work, and she could not have told whether two minutes or ten had passed when she was startled

by an odd, guttural voice close to her asking, "What is the matter, little girl?"

If the voice was strange, the figure she saw when she looked up was stranger still. A gaunt old man in a suit of rusty black, with straggling gray hair and beard, stood holding his hat in his hand, gazing at her with eyes so bright they made her uneasy.

"Nothing," she answered, rising hastily.

But the visitor continued to stand there and smile at her, shaking his head and repeating, "Mustn't cry."

"I am not crying," Rosalind insisted, glancing over her shoulder to make sure of a way of escape.

With a long, thin finger this strange person now pointed toward the house, saying something she understood to be an inquiry for Miss Herbert.

Miss Herbert was the housekeeper, and Rosalind knew she was at church; but when she tried to explain, the old man shook his head, and taking from his pocket a tablet with a pencil attached, he held it out to her, touching his ear as he uttered the one word "Deaf."

Rosalind understood she was to write her answer, and somewhat flurried she sat down on the

edge of the bench and with much deliberation and in large clear letters conveyed the information, "She is out."

The old man looked at the tablet and then at Rosalind, bowing and smiling as if well pleased. "You'll tell her I'm going to the city to-morrow?" he asked.

There was something very queer in the way he opened his mouth and used his tongue, Rosalind thought, as she nodded emphatically, feeling that this singular individual had her at an unfair advantage. At least she would find out who he was, and so, as she still held the tablet, she wrote, "What is your name?"

He laughed as if this were a joke, and searching in his pocket, produced a card which he presented with a bow. On it was printed "C. J. Morgan, Cabinet Work."

"What is your name?" he asked.

Rosalind hesitated. She was not sure it at all concerned this stranger to know her name, but as he stood smiling and waiting, she did not know how to refuse; so she bent over the tablet, her yellow braid falling over her shoulder, as she wrote, "Rosalind Patterson Whittredge."

"Mr. Pat's daughter?" There was a twinkle in the old man's eye, and surprise and delight in his voice.

Rosalind sprang up, her own eyes shining. "How stupid of me!" she cried. "Why, you must be the magician, and you have a funny old shop, where father used to play when he was little. Oh, I hope you will let me come to see you!" Suddenly remembering the tablet, she looked at it despairingly. She couldn't write half she wished to say.

Morgan, however, seemed to understand pretty clearly, to judge from the way he laughed and asked if Mr. Pat was well.

Rosalind nodded and wrote, "He has gone to Japan."

"So far? Coming home soon?"

With a mournful countenance she shook her head.

Morgan stood looking down on her with a smile that no longer seemed uncanny. Indeed, there was something almost sweet in the rugged face as he repeated, "Mr. Pat's little girl, well, well," as if it were quite incredible.

Rosalind longed to ask at least a dozen ques-

tions, but it is dampening to one's ardor to have to spell every word, and she only nodded and smiled in her turn as she handed back the tablet.

"I wish father had taught me to talk on my fingers," she thought, feeling that one branch of her education had been neglected. "Perhaps Uncle Allan will, when he comes."

She watched the odd figure till it disappeared around a turn in the trim garden path, then she picked up the big red pillow which had fallen on the grass, and replacing it in one corner of the bench, curled herself up against it. The hymn book lay forgotten.

"I believe things are really beginning to happen," she said to herself. "You need not pretend they are not, for they are," she added, shaking her finger at the griffins with their provoking lack of expression. "You wouldn't make friends with anybody, not to save their lives, and it seemed as if I were never to get acquainted with a soul, when here I have met the magician in the most surprising way. And to think I didn't know him!"

The dream spirit was abroad in the garden.

Across the lawn the shadows made mysterious progress; the sunlight seemed sifted through an enchanted veil, and like the touch of fairy fingers was the summer breeze against Rosalind's cheek, as with her head against the red pillow, she travelled for the first time in her life back into the past.

Back to the dear old library where two students worked, and where from the windows one could see the tiled roofs of the university. Back to the world of dreams where dwelt that friendly host of story-book people, where only a few short weeks ago Friendship, too, with its winding shady streets and this same stately garden and the griffins, had belonged as truly as did the Forest where that other Rosalind, loveliest of all story people, wandered.

Friendship was no longer a dream, and Rosalind, her head against the red pillow, was beginning to think that dreams were best.

"If we choose, we may travel always in the Forest, where the birds sing and the sunlight sifts through the trees."

These words of Cousin Louis's in his introduction to the old story pleased Rosalind's fancy.

She liked to shut her eyes and think of the Forest and the brave-hearted company gathered there, and always this brought before her the fair face of the miniature on her father's desk and a faint, sweet memory of clasping arms.

When the doctor with a grave face had said that only rest and change of scene could restore Cousin Louis's health, and when Rosalind understood that this must mean for her separation from both her dear companions, it was to the Forest she had turned.

"I'll pretend I am banished like Rosalind in the story," she had said, leaning against her father's shoulder, as he looked over the proofs of "The Life of Shakespeare" on which Cousin Louis had worked too hard. "Then I'll know I am certain to find you sometime."

Her father's arm had drawn her close, — she liked to recall it now, and how, when she added, "But I wish I had Celia and Touchstone to go with me," he had answered, "You are certain to find pleasant people in the Forest of Arden, little girl." And putting aside the proofs, he had talked to her of her grandmother and the old town of Friendship.

She had been almost a week in Friendship now, and — well, things were not altogether as she had pictured them. Silver locks and lace caps, arm-chairs and some sort of fluffy knitting work, had been a part of her idea of a grandmother, and lo! her own grandmother was erect and slender, with not a thread of gray in her dark hair, nor a line in her handsome face.

She was kind — oh, yes, but so sad in her heavy crepe. Aunt Genevieve in her trailing gowns was charming to behold, but no more company for Rosalind — at least not much more — than the griffins. Miss Herbert was not a merry, comfortable person like their own Mrs. Browne at home. The house was very quiet. The garden was beautiful, but she longed to be outside its tall iron gates; and she longed — how she longed — for her old companions!

Cousin Louis had given her her favorite story in a binding of soft leather, delicious to hold against one's cheek, and her father had added a copy of the beautiful miniature. With these treasures she had set out upon her journey. But she had begun to feel as if in the great

Forest she had lost her way, when the friendly face of the magician reassured her.

The sound of sweeping draperies broke in upon her thoughts. It was Aunt Genevieve, and she had not learned her hymn. Picking up her book, she stole swiftly across the grass till she was hidden by some tall shrubbery. Before her was a high hedge of privet; beyond it, among the trees, the chimneys of a red brick house.

Walking back and forth, Rosalind began to study in earnest. Looking first at her book and then up at the blue sky, she repeated: —

"'Lo! such the child whose early feet
The paths of peace have trod,
Whose secret heart with influence sweet
Is upward drawn to God.'"

CHAPTER SECOND.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HEDGE.

"Give me leave to speak my mind."

THERE was another garden on the other side of the hedge; not so large, nor so beautifully kept perhaps, but a pleasant garden, for all that. The red brick house to which it belonged was by no means so stately as the one whose doorstep the griffins guarded, yet it had an importance all its own. On week days, when the heavy shutters on the lower front windows were open, *The National Bank of Fricndship* was to be seen in gilt letters on the glass; on Sundays, however, when they were closed, there was little to suggest that it was anything more than a private dwelling. It was a square, roomy house, and the part not in use for bank purposes was occupied by the cashier, Mr. Milton Roberts, and his family.

While Rosalind, curled up on the garden seat, was thinking of home, Maurice Roberts lay in the hammock under the big maple near the side porch, where his mother and Miss Betty Bishop sat talking. He held a book, but instead of reading was allowing himself the lazy entertainment of listening to their conversation.

From his position, a little behind the visitor, he had an excellent view of her as she sat erect in the wicker chair, her parasol across her lap. Miss Betty was plump and short, and had a dimple in her chin. Her hair, which was turning gray, waved prettily back from her forehead into the thickest of braids, and altogether there was a pleasant air of crispness about her; though something in the keenness of her glance, or the firmness with which her lips met, suggested that on occasion she might be unyielding. "The Barnwell stubbornness," she herself would have explained, with the same complacency she manifested when displaying her grandmother's tea-set.

Mrs. Roberts, Maurice's mother, was a gentle person, with large, soft eyes and a quiet manner.

The preliminary conversation had not been

interesting, pertaining chiefly to flowers and the weather, and Maurice gave a sigh of satisfaction when, after a moment's pause, Miss Betty straightened herself and remarked, "Well, I hear the will is certain to be sustained."

"Then the property will have to be sold?" questioned Mrs. Roberts.

"Yes, and I may as well say good-by to the cream-jug and sugar-dish that Cousin Anne always said should be mine. Still, I never shall believe Cousin Thomas was out of his mind when he made that last will, it was too much like him. Dear knows it ought to be broken, but not on that ground. It was a case of pure spite."

"Oh, Betty!"

Maurice smiled to himself at his mother's tone.

"I assure you it was. I knew Cousin Thomas. Didn't Cousin Anne tell me dozens of times in his presence, 'Betty, this is your cream-jug and sugar-dish, because they match your teapot'?"

"I should think you had enough silver, Betty; still it was a shame Miss Anne left that list unsigned," said Mrs. Roberts.

"If you knew Cousin Anne at all, Mrs.

Roberts, you knew how hesitating she was. She couldn't decide whether to leave the Canton china to Ellen Marshall or to Tom's wife. She changed her mind any number of times, but she was always clear about my cream-jug and sugar-dish. If Cousin Thomas had had any decency, he would have considered her wishes. Think of my own grandmother's things put up at public auction!"

"Most of Mr. Gilpin's money goes to the hospital, I suppose," remarked Mrs. Roberts.

"Pretty much everything but the real estate in and around Friendship, and the contents of the house, all of which will have to be sold and divided among his first cousins or their heirs. The only bequests made besides the money to the hospital are to Celia Fair and Allan Whittredge. Celia is to have the spinet, and Allan that beautiful old ring, if ever it comes to light again. I wish Cousin Thomas had left Celia some money. She was one person for whom he had a little affection."

Maurice wished so too. He admired Miss Celia Fair, and felt it was too bad she should get only an antiquated piano.

"Are the Fairs related to the Gilpins?" his mother asked. Not being a native of Friendship, she had difficulty in mastering the intricacies of its relationships.

It was ground upon which Miss Betty was entirely at home, however. "They were kin to Cousin Thomas's wife," she explained. "Mrs. Fair's grandmother was half-sister to Cousin Emma's mother, and raised Cousin Emma as her own child. Of course it is not very near when it comes to Celia. The spinet belonged to old Mrs. Johnson, — Celia's great-grandmother, you know, — whose name was also Celia. Saint Cecilia they used to call her, because she was so good and played and sang so sweetly. It is right the spinet should go to Celia, but that would not have influenced Cousin Thomas a minute if he had not wished her to have it."

"And the ring has never been heard of?" Mrs. Roberts asked, as her visitor paused for breath.

"I doubt if it ever comes to light. It is nearly three years now since it disappeared," was the reply. Miss Betty looked up at the vines above her head, and her lips curled into a sort of

half smile. "I should like to hear Cousin Ellen Whittredge on the will," she added. "I don't think she cares much about the money, however; it is more that old feeling against Dr. Fair. You remember he testified to Mr. Gilpin's sanity."

"And her son?" asked Mrs. Roberts.

"Allan? It is hard to find out what Allan thinks, but there is no bitterness in him. He is like his father, poor man! What I am curious to know is, what Cousin Thomas meant by saying in his will that Allan knew his wishes in regard to the ring. That strikes me as a little sensational. I asked Allan about it the last time I saw him, but he only laughed and said he'd have to get it before he could dispose of it."

Miss Betty now made some motions preliminary to rising, but as if on second thought, she laid her parasol across her knees again and asked, "Have you heard that Patterson's daughter is here?"

"Yes, I think I saw her in the carriage with her grandmother yesterday," was Mrs. Roberts's reply.

This was news to Maurice, and he listened with interest.

Miss Betty shook her head. "I am surprised," she said. "That marriage of Patterson's was a dreadful blow to Cousin Ellen."

"It seems to me she was unreasonable about it. I am glad she sent for him before his father died." Mrs. Roberts spoke with some hesitation. She did not often array her own opinions against those of her friends.

"I don't blame her as some do. A person of that sort, and Patterson the very light of her eyes! How would you feel if Maurice some day should do a thing like that?"

Maurice laughed softly. His thoughts were not much occupied with marriage. His mother ignored the question, and in her turn asked, "Did Mrs. Whittredge ever see her daughter-in-law?"

"No, indeed. This child was not more than three when she died."

"Poor little thing!" Mrs. Roberts sighed.

"Such a name! I detest fancy names. Rosalind!" Miss Betty rose.

"A good old English name and very pretty, I think. Was it her mother's?"

"I suppose so, but I don't know. Yes, I must go; Sophy will think I am lost. Good-by," and Miss Betty stepped briskly down the path.

The gate had hardly closed when Maurice heard some one calling him. Looking over his shoulder, he saw his sister Katherine beckoning.

"Maurice, Maurice, do come here; I want you to see something."

Her tone impressed him as unduly mysterious. "What is it?" he asked indifferently.

"Come, and I'll show you."

"I sha'n't come till you tell me," he persisted.

"Oh, I think you might, because if I stop to tell you she may be gone."

"Who'll be gone? You might have told it twice over in this time."

"The girl I want you to see," explained Katherine, drawing nearer in desperation. "Did you know there was a girl next door?"

"Yes, of course." There was nothing in Maurice's tone to indicate how brief a time had passed since this information had been acquired.

"Truly? I don't believe it," Katherine faltered.

"She is Mrs. Whittredge's granddaughter, and her name is Rosalind, so now!"

Privately, Katherine thought her brother's power of finding things out, little short of supernatural. "Don't you want to see her?" she asked meekly. "There is a thin place in the hedge behind the calycanthus bush, and she is walking to and fro studying something." Would Maurice declare he had already seen this girl?

Maurice sat up and reached for a crutch that rested against the tree. He had his share of curiosity. He was a tall, well-grown boy of thirteen, and it was apparent as he swung himself after Katherine, that accident and not disease had caused his lameness.

Rosalind, studying her hymn all unconscious of observation, was a pleasant sight.

"Isn't she pretty?" whispered Katherine, but Maurice silenced her so sternly she concluded he did not agree with her.

In reality he thought very much as she did, although he would not have used the same adjective. There was something unusual about this girl. Why it was, he did not understand, but she seemed somehow to belong in a special way to the sweet old garden with its June roses. Maurice had fancies that would have astonished Katherine

beyond measure if she could have known anything about them. But how was she to know when he pinched her arm and looked sternly indifferent?

The tea bell called them back to the house; on the way Katherine's enthusiasm burst forth afresh.

"Isn't she sweet? and such a beautiful name — Rosalind. How old do you think she is? and do you suppose she is going to live there? Oh, Maurice, shouldn't you be afraid of Mrs. Whittredge?"

"I don't know anything about her," Maurice replied, forgetting for the moment that he had been pretending to know a great deal.

"I should like to have my hair tied on top of my head with a big ribbon bow as hers is," continued Katherine, who would innocently persist in laying herself open to brotherly scorn.

"I suppose you think you will look like her then," was his retort.

"Now, Maurice, I don't. I know I am not pretty." Katherine's round face grew suddenly long, and tears filled her blue eyes.

"Don't be a goose, then. I'll tell you what

she made me think of, that statue of Joan of Arc — don't you remember? Where she is listening to the voices? We saw it at the Academy of Fine Arts."

"Why, Maurice, how funny! She is much prettier than that," said Katherine.

CHAPTER THIRD.

FRIENDSHIP.

"True it is that we have seen better days."

A RAMBLING, sleepy town was Friendship, with few aspirations beyond the traditions of its grandfathers and a fine indifference toward modern improvements.

During the era of monstrous creations in black walnut it had clung to its old mahogany and rosewood, and chromos had never displaced in its affections the time-worn colored prints of little Samuel or flower-decked shepherdesses. In consequence of this conservatism Friendship one day awoke in the fashion.

There were fine old homes in Friendship which in their soft-toned browns and grays seemed as much a part of the landscape as the forest trees that surrounded them and shaded the broad street. Associated with these man-

sions were names dignified and substantial, such as Molesworth, Parton, Gilpin, Whittredge.

In times past the atmosphere of the village had seemed to be pervaded by something of the spirit of its name, for here life flowed on serenely in old grooves and its ways were the peaceful ways of friendship. But of late years, alas! something alien and discordant had crept in.

"'And what is Friendship but a name—'"

quoted the cabinet-maker sadly one morning when after climbing the hill from the wharf he paused to rest on the low stone wall surrounding the Gilpin place.

Landing Lane ended at the top of the hill, and here at right angles to it the Main Street of Friendship might be said to begin, slowly descending to a level and following the leisurely curves of the old stage road till it came to a straggling end at the foot of another prominence known as Red Hill.

In forty years a life takes deep root, and this time had passed since Morgan, a raw Scotch boy of eighteen, had come to Friendship as

assistant to the village cabinet-maker. A year or two later an illness deprived him of his hearing, but fortunately not of his skill, and upon the death of his employer he succeeded to the business, his kindly, simple nature, together with his misfortune, having won the heart of Friendship.

His fame for making and doing over furniture had spread beyond the borders of the town; his opinion was valued highly by collectors, and it was said he might have made a fortune in the city. But what use had he for a fortune? It was the friendly greetings, the neighborly kindnesses, the comradeship with the children of the village, that made his life.

In spite of its rugged lines his face as he grew older had taken on a singularly sweet expression, but it was sad to-day as he sat on the wall in his knit jacket and work apron, looking down on the town, its roofs and spires showing amongst the trees. It seemed to him that the times were out of joint, and his cheerful philosophy was beginning to fail him. Something had been wrong ever since Patterson Whittredge went away, more than a dozen years ago.

Morgan never failed to follow with interest the careers of the boys of Friendship as they went out into the world, and of all the boys of the village Patterson had been his favorite. He had understood the trouble as well as if it had been carefully explained to him. His deafness had quickened his insight. A girl's lovely face on Pat's dressing-table, seen when he replaced a broken caster, partly told the story, and Mrs. Whittredge's pride and determination were no secret to any one.

Judge Whittredge's whitening head and heavy step, his fruitless search for health abroad, his return to die at last in his old home, Patterson's coming, — sent for by his heart-broken mother, — this was the rest of the story. But before this family difference had been settled by the stern hand of death, the removal of Thomas Gilpin had precipitated another quarrel upon the town.

It was a puzzle to Morgan that a man like his old friend Mr. Gilpin, who had it in his power to do so much good, should have chosen to do harm instead. As he rose to go, he looked over his shoulder at the old house, closed and deserted since the death of its owner.

The site was a beautiful one, commanding a view of valley and hill and the narrow winding river. The house, an unpretentious square of red brick, with sloping roof and dormer windows, wore its hundred years with dignity, and amid its fine trees was an object of interest to strangers, of pride to the villagers.

Below it on the slope stood a more modern house, in what had been until recently a handsome garden. Morgan as he passed recalled how proud Dr. Fair had been of his flowers. Celia, who was entering the gate, nodded and smiled brightly. He noted, however, that her face was losing its soft curves and rose tints. Celia was another of his favorites, and he knew she was having her battle with misfortune, meeting it as bravely as a young woman could. Thomas Gilpin might so easily have smoothed the way for her. The spinet was an interesting heirloom, no doubt, but would not help Celia solve the problem of bread and butter.

The shop of the cabinet-maker was just off Main Street, at the foot of the hill. To its original two rooms he had added two more, and here he lived with no companions but a striped

cat and a curly dog, who endured each other and shared the affection of their master.

Morgan's housekeeping was not burdensome. Certain of his neighbors always remembered him on baking day, and his tastes were simple. His shop opened immediately on the street; back of it was his living room and the small garden where he cultivated the gayest blooms. The living room had an open fireplace, for it was one of the cabinet-maker's pleasures to sit in the firelight when the work of the day was over, and a small oil stove sufficed for his cooking. On one side of the chimney was a high-backed settle, and above it a book shelf. Like most Scotch boys, he had had a fair education, and possessed a genuine reverence for books and a love of reading. In the opposite corner was an ancient mahogany desk where he kept his accounts, and near by in the window a shelf always full of plants in the winter. A cupboard of his own manufacture, a table, a lamp, and an arm-chair completed the furniture of the room. The walls he had painted a dull red, and over the fireplace in fanciful letters had traced this motto: "Good in everything."

To this cheerful belief Morgan held firmly, although there were times like this morning, when coming out of the sunlight and feeling a little weary, he noticed that the walls were growing dingy and the motto dim, and sighed to think how hard it was to see the good in some things.

He placed a paper in the old secretary and was turning toward the shop when he stopped short in amazement, for in the doorway stood Rosalind, her face full of eagerness. Behind her was Miss Herbert, whom Morgan entirely overlooked in his pleasure at seeing Mr. Pat's little girl again.

He shook hands warmly and offered the arm-chair, but Rosalind had no thought of sitting down. As she gazed with bright-eyed interest around the room, her glance fell on the motto, and she pointed to it and then to herself.

The cabinet-maker was puzzled. "Is it your motto?" he asked.

She nodded brightly.

Morgan turned to the shelf, took down a large volume of Shakespeare's plays, and laying it on the table began to turn the pages rapidly. Rosa-

lind looked over his arm. He ran his finger down a leaf presently and pointed to the line. "There," he said.

Rosalind turned back a page and pointed to her own name, and then they both laughed as if it were a great coincidence.

A sharp tap on his arm made Miss Herbert's presence known to Morgan. Miss Herbert was not of Friendship. She knew the value of time if the cabinet-maker did not, and had no idea of waiting while he discussed Shakespeare in pantomime with Rosalind.

Miss Herbert with the aid of the tablet, and Morgan with many queer gestures to help out his faltering tongue, so long without the guide of hearing, contrived to despatch the business relating to a claw-footed sofa. When it was finished, Rosalind was missing, and was discovered in the little garden, making friends with the black poodle, while the striped cat looked on from the fence.

It was with evident reluctance she accompanied Miss Herbert to the carriage. Before she left she took the tablet and wrote, "I am going to learn to talk on my fingers."

"Good," the cabinet-maker answered, and he followed them to the street, smiling and nodding. "Come again," he called as they drove away.

When he returned to the shop, the world seemed brighter, the mist of doubt had lifted.

"The rough places can't last always," he told himself as he sandpapered the claw toes of the sofa. "We are certain to come to a turn in the lane after a while. There's good in everything, somewhere."

Perhaps the coming of Mr. Pat's little girl was a good omen. To him at least it was a most interesting event, nor was he the only person in Friendship who found it so.

CHAPTER FOURTH.

AN UNQUIET MORNING.

"You amaze me, ladies."

FARTHER up the street on the other side, but within sight of the Whittredges', was Mrs. Graham's Boarding and Day School for Young Ladies.

The broad, one story and a half mansion, with rooms enough for a small hotel, was still known as the Bishop place, although nearly twenty years had passed since the little brown and white house on Church Street had opened its doors to Miss Betty and her invalid father, and to such of the massive furniture as could be accommodated within its walls. In her circular Mrs. Graham was careful to state that her school was commodiously housed in the mansion of the late distinguished Senator Charlton H. Bishop, and many a daughter groaned over her algebra or French verbs in the very room where her mother or grandmother be-

fore her had fleeted the time carelessly in evenings long past, for brilliant was the tradition of the Bishop hospitality.

Celia Fair, who taught drawing in the school, and on occasion kept study hour in what had once been the long drawing-room, had a fancy that the spirit of those days was responsible for many an outburst of mischief At present Mrs. Graham's pupils were in a fever of curiosity over the new arrival at the Whittredges'.

The Whittredge place had been invested by them with something of a halo of romance, founded chiefly on the seclusion in which it pleased Mrs. Whittredge to live. Bits of gossip let fall by their elders were eagerly treasured; it became the fashion to rave over the beauty of the haughty Miss Genevieve, and even her brother who was not haughty, but quite like other people, was allowed a share of the halo on account of his connection with the lost ring, made famous by the contested will.

Katherine Roberts, returning to school after several days' absence, found herself unusually popular. Katherine lived next door to the unknown; she had seen her; it was even said she

had heard her speak. Excitement grew as the news spread.

The girls were standing in groups on the porch and steps, laughing and talking together, and at sight of Katherine gave her an uproarious greeting.

Round, rosy-faced, blue-eyed Katherine, with her brown hair in two tight plaits turned under and tied with a ribbon behind her ears, was a little abashed at the attention she excited.

"What is she like, Katherine? tell us — the new girl at the Whittredges'."

"She is standing at the gate now," answered Katherine, looking over her shoulder.

"Is she? Oh, where?"

"Let's walk by and see her."

"We'll be tardy if we do, and at any rate there is the carriage; perhaps they will drive past."

"Look! there's Miss Genevieve. No, they are going the other way."

"What are you staring at?" demanded Belle Parton, joining the group. Belle was a gypsy-looking girl with merry black eyes, and hair that refused to be smooth like Katherine's, but continually fell in her eyes. As she spoke she put

her hat on the step and proceeded to adjust the round comb she wore.

"The Whittredge girl. Have you seen her, Belle?" asked Charlotte Ellis.

"No; what is she like?"

"Katherine is the only one who has seen her; she says she is lovely."

"Oh, she is! You ought to see her, Belle. Maurice and I peeped through the hedge and saw her walking to and fro studying something. And her name is Rosalind. Isn't that a beautiful name?"

"I don't believe she is much," Belle announced, with a turn of her head. The only reason she had for saying this was the naughty one of wishing to snub Katherine, who took everything in earnest and now looked crestfallen.

"Never mind, Kit; tell us some more about her," urged one of the others.

"Grandmamma says she is surprised at Mrs. Whittredge's having her here. You know she would have nothing to do with her son after he married, until lately, and she never saw her granddaughter before. I think family quarrels are awfully interesting; don't you?" As Char-

lotte spoke, the bell rang, and the girls turned toward the house.

"Do you, Charlotte?" exclaimed Katherine, who was accustomed to pin her faith to her friend's opinions, but thought that quarrels being wrong could not be interesting.

"I think so, too. They are so delightfully mysterious," echoed another of the girls.

"Nonsense! What is there that is mysterious?" put in pugnacious Belle.

It may have been the alluring summer day, or the fact that it was near the end of the term, and discipline had relaxed, but certain it was that a general restlessness and inclination to whisper pervaded the study hour. It was the fashion among the girls to adore Celia Fair, and usually she had no difficulty in keeping order, but this morning even her presence was without effect.

Belle Parton had her history propped up before her in a way that suggested some mischief going on behind its shelter, rather than any serious study. Katherine, who was honestly trying to study, was distracted by the signals flying around her. Charlotte Ellis, whose seat

was near the window, seemed principally occupied in peeping between the sash curtains.

Celia had looked up for the second time to say, "Girls, I must have better order," and things had for several minutes quieted down, when Charlotte suddenly announced in a loud whisper, "Here they come!" and with that there was a rush for the windows.

The cause of the excitement was of course the Whittredge carriage, but all anybody caught was a fleeting glimpse of a white dress beside Miss Genevieve's black one, and, as luck would have it, Mrs. Graham opened the door just in time to witness the scramble for a view.

"Young ladies, you amaze me! What is the meaning of this?" she demanded, as the girls, half of whom had rushed because the others had, returned abashed to their seats.

"I never knew them to behave so before," said Celia, in apology. "Something seems to be wrong to-day."

"Wrong, indeed," repeated Mrs. Graham, who was a person of somewhat majestic appearance. Then her glance fell on Belle's desk. "And this explains the rapid disappearance of my

chalk!" she added, holding up to view a pen tray on which were arranged a number of tiny goblets and dishes neatly cut out of chalk.

Katherine, who had not left her seat, laughed nervously. She stood in great awe of the principal, and she did not in the least wish to laugh.

Mrs. Graham looked at her sternly. "One mark in deportment, Katherine, and three to those who left their desks, and you will all spend your recess indoors. Belle, I will see you in the office."

Belle followed Mrs. Graham, with her head held high, her lips pursed up saucily, her black eyes snapping. Katherine, through her own tear-filled ones, watched her in astonishment.

When Belle returned study hour was over, and the culprits who were condemned to stay indoors had grouped themselves beside the window.

"What did she do to you, Belle?" they cried.

"Nothing, — just talked. She said it was wasting time and chalk, and that it wasn't honest. Such a fuss about a little chalk!"

Celia Fair, who had her hat on, ready to go

home, came behind Belle, and with a hand on either side of her face she lifted it till the saucy eyes looked into her own. "Does that make any difference, really — because it is just chalk?" she asked.

Belle wriggled out of her hands, only to clasp her around the waist. "I wouldn't take your chalk," she said, laughing.

"I don't know what to think of you to-day," Miss Fair continued, looking around the group. "I am afraid Mrs. Graham will not trust me to keep study hour after this."

There was a general cry of, "Oh, Miss Celia, why not?"

"Do you think she can have a high opinion of my ability to keep order?"

"But no one else could do any better."

"If Mrs. Graham had been here, you would not have rushed to the window, I know very well."

"But we are so much fonder of you, Miss Celia," urged Charlotte.

"If that is the case I'd like you to show it by behaving," said Celia, as she left the room.

When Belle told at home about the day's occurrences, her father laughed.

"I shall tell Mrs. Graham she must introduce manual training. 'Satan finds some mischief still,' you see. Maybe Belle will turn out a famous sculptor."

"At any rate, colonel, you ought not to encourage her in such pranks," Mrs. Parton remarked, shaking her head at her husband, who never saw anything to criticise in the one little daughter among his five boys.

CHAPTER FIFTH.

MAURICE.

"The stubbornness of fortune."

IT was the first of the month, and a steady stream of people passed in and out of the bank. Maurice sat on the steps leading up to the private entrance, and with few exceptions each new-comer had a pleasant greeting or kindly inquiry for him.

Miss Betty Bishop rustling out, bank book in hand, called, "How are you, Maurice? When are you and Katherine coming to take tea with me? Let me know and I'll have waffles."

The cabinet-maker came to the foot of the steps to ask about the lame knee, and shook his head in sympathy with Maurice's doleful face.

Colonel Parton, a tall, gray-mustached man, accompanied by two hunting dogs, hailed him: "Not going with the boys? Ah, I forgot your knee. Too bad! Jack's got the dandiest new fishing-rod you ever saw."

"As if I didn't know it," growled Maurice, as the colonel entered the bank.

The next person to accost him was Miss Celia Fair. She hadn't any bank business, but seeing Maurice as she passed, stopped to speak to him. She sat down beside him and tried in her pretty, soft way to cheer him.

"Don't look so gloomy, dear; you know if you are careful you will soon be all right again," she said.

At this Maurice poured forth all his disappointment at not being able to go with the Parton boys on their excursion down the bay.

"I am just as sorry for you as I can be," said Celia, clasping her hands in her lap — such slender hands — and looking far away as if she were tired of everything near by. It was only for a moment, then she said with a little laugh, "You can't possibly understand, Maurice, but I shouldn't mind a sprained knee in the least; I think I could even enjoy it, if I hadn't any more responsibility than you have."

"But you don't care to go fishing," he suggested.

"Oh, yes, I do; I like to fish." With a smile she said good-by, and went away.

After this Maurice settled down into deeper despondency than before. He had refused an invitation to drive, had treated with bitter scorn Katherine's suggestion that he might like to go out to the creek with her and Blossom. "You could ride in the stage, you know, and have to walk only the least little bit," she said.

"Thank you; it is *such* fun to throw stones in the water," he replied, with elaborate politeness.

That Maurice was badly spoiled was no secret. The only boy in the family, with bright, engaging ways when things went to please him, he had been petted and humored by his parents, given up to by Katherine, and treated as a leader by his boy friends, until he had come to look upon his own pleasure as the most important thing in the universe. Not that he realized this. He would have been greatly surprised to hear he was selfish.

The accident by which his knee had been sprained severely was an experience as trying as it was new to him. At first the petting he received at home, and the attentions of his friends, added to his sense of importance and made it endurable, but this could not continue

indefinitely. Ball playing and other sports must go on, and Maurice, to his aggrieved surprise, found they could go on very well without him.

This morning his mother had expostulated mildly. "My son, you ought not to make yourself so miserable. You could not be more unhappy if you were to be lame always."

"It is *now* I care about," he replied petulantly.

"I don't know what to do with Maurice," he overheard her say to his father in the hall.

"Let him alone. I am ashamed of him," was Mr. Roberts's reply.

And now, deserted and abused, Maurice was very miserable, and when he could stand it no longer he sought a distant spot in the garden and threw himself face down in the grass.

He had been lying here some time when a voice apparently quite near asked, "Have you hurt yourself?"

Lifting his flushed, unhappy face, he saw peeping at him through the hedge the girl Katherine had been so interested in on Sunday. She, too, was lying on the grass, and her fair hair was spread out around her like a veil. Maurice

raised himself on his elbow and surveyed her in surprise, forgetting to reply.

"What is the matter?" she asked again, looking at him with a pair of serious gray eyes.

"Nothing," he answered.

The gray eyes grew merry. Rosalind laughed, as she said, "Then you ought not to groan. I thought when I heard you, perhaps you had fallen from a tree."

"I wasn't groaning," he protested, feeling ashamed.

"Maybe you call it sighing, but it was dreadfully deep."

"Well, I think a fellow has a right to sigh when he can't do anything or go anywhere, and everybody else is having a good time." Maurice felt anxious to vindicate himself.

"I am not having a good time," said Rosalind, "at least not very; but then you know if you stay in the Forest of Arden, something pleasant is bound to happen before long."

Maurice stared at her blankly.

"Perhaps you don't know the story," Rosalind suggested.

"What story?"

"Its real name is 'As You Like It,' but I call it 'The Story of the Forest.'"

"What is it about?"

"Oh, — about a banished duke, who lived in the Forest, like Robin Hood, you know, with a lot of people who were fond of him. He had a daughter, named Rosalind, and after a while she was banished too and went to look for her father in the Forest. Her cousin Celia and a funny clown, Touchstone, went with her, and they were all disguised. And — well, there is a great deal more to it — but they were all cheerful and brave — everybody is in the Forest of Arden, because they are sure there is good in everything if you only try to find it."

"But that is all a story. It isn't true."

"Oh, yes, it is."

"There wasn't a bit of good in hurting my knee and having the whole summer spoiled." Maurice's tone was undeniably fretful.

"If you had been banished as Rosalind was, I suppose you would not have thought there was any good in that; but she didn't cry about it. She made the best of it, and had a good time in spite of it."

"Who says I was crying?" Maurice demanded angrily.

Rosalind opened her gray eyes wide, then she sat up and tossed back her hair. Maurice felt convicted of rudeness. Was she going? He hoped not, for he wished to talk to her.

"I suppose I am rather cross," he acknowledged; "but don't you think it is pretty hard to hurt your knee and have to walk with a crutch, and stay at home when the other boys go fishing?"

"Yes, indeed. Does it hurt much?" Rosalind asked, with ready sympathy.

"No, not now; it did at first, but the doctor says it will be five or six months before it is well again."

"Then it isn't for always? That is something good."

Maurice somehow felt uncomfortable. He did not wish the emphasis laid on the good. It seemed wise to change the subject. "What a lot of hair you have," he remarked.

"It has been washed, and grandmamma said I might dry it in the sun," Rosalind explained, shaking her head so vigorously she was enveloped in a shining cloud.

"Isn't it a great bother? Kit hates to have hers braided."

"Who is Kit?"

"She is my sister Katherine."

"It must be nice to have a sister. I haven't anybody but father and Cousin Louis, and of course they are better than any one else. There are grandmamma and Aunt Genevieve, but I am not very well acquainted with them yet. I should love to have some children related to me."

"I have a little sister, too; her name is Blossom. That is, her real name is Mary, and we call her Blossom."

"Kit and Blossom; and what is your name?" Rosalind asked.

"Maurice Roberts."

Rosalind tossed back her hair and began to twist it into a shining rope. "I am Rosalind Whittredge," she said. "I should not think you would ever be unhappy," she added.

"Do you know, I saw you last Sunday when you were studying something. Kit and I peeped at you through the hedge."

"I was learning a hymn for grandmamma. Why didn't you speak to me?"

"I didn't know whether you'd like it."

"Why, of course I should have liked it. I was beginning to think that day I should never get acquainted with any one, and I was feeling dreadfully lonesome when the magician came in."

"The magician?" Maurice exclaimed. Certainly this was a singular girl who talked about magicians in an everyday tone.

Rosalind laughed. "I mean Morgan, who does cabinet work. Do you know him?"

"Everybody in Friendship knows Morgan. He is a good fellow, too. Why do you call him the magician?"

"Because that is what father called him when he was a little boy. Once when Morgan had made an old desk look like new, grandfather said he was a magician, and father, who heard him, thought he meant it really. Father and Uncle Allan used to play in his shop and talk on their fingers to him. Can you do that?"

"Why, yes; I'll teach you if you like."

"I should like it very much. It is so tiresome to write things."

"Morgan is very clever, too, about understanding. You only begin to spell a word

when he guesses what you want to say," Maurice added.

"I went to his shop the other day with Miss Herbert, but she wouldn't let me stay long. I made friends with his funny dog."

"Do you know what we call him? Curly Q. And the cat — did you see him? He is Crisscross."

"How funny," said Rosalind. "I think they are very good names. Crisscross wouldn't have anything to do with me."

"Are you going to live here?" Maurice asked.

"No; but I shall be here a long time. I think Friendship is a nice place, and funny too, because it has a bank with a garden around it. At home our banks are all on the street and have offices over them."

"Yes; Friendship isn't a city," Maurice acknowledged apologetically. "I should like to live in a big city."

"I like Friendship. It only seems a little odd, you know," Rosalind hastened to add. "Do they ever let you go into the bank part of your house?"

"Why, of course, I can go in whenever I

choose. My father is the cashier, and it is to take care of the bank that we live here."

The conversation was brought to an end by a maid sent to find Rosalind. After she had gone Maurice saw a book on the grass where she had been lying, and reaching through the hedge with his crutch, he drew it toward him. When he removed the outside cover, even his uncritical eye saw it was a handsome book. "Shakespeare's 'As You Like It.' Edited by Louis A. Sargent," he read. "Why, it is one of Shakespeare's plays," he said, in surprise. So this was the story Rosalind was talking about.

On the fly-leaf was some writing in small clear letters. "For Rosalind, with the wish that she may meet the hard things of life as bravely, and find as much happiness by the way, as did her namesake in the Forest of Arden. From her friend, Louis A. Sargent."

"Meet the hard things of life as bravely—" Maurice's face grew hot. "You wouldn't have thought there was any good in that." The touch of scorn in Rosalind's tone stung as he recalled it. He turned the leaves and began to read.

It was a pleasure to look at the large clear type; he soon became interested.

Half an hour later Katherine's voice broke in upon the Forest of Arden. "Maurice, Maurice, what are you doing? Mother sent me to find you."

"I am reading. Don't bother, please," was the reply, in a tone so far removed from melancholy that Katherine, reassured, obediently retired.

CHAPTER SIXTH.

PUZZLES.

"How weary are my spirits!"

UP to this time life had been a simple and joyous matter to Rosalind. She had known her own small trials and perplexities, but her father or Cousin Louis were always at hand to smooth out tangles and show her how to be merry over difficulties. Now all was different. There were puzzles on every side and no one to turn to.

The house behind the griffins was not exactly a cheerful place. Rosalind found herself stealing about on tiptoe lest she disturb the silence of the spacious rooms. She hardly ventured to more than peep into the drawing-room, where Miss Herbert's liking for twilight effects had full sway. There was a pier table here, supported by griffins, the counterpart in feature of those on the doorstep, which she longed to ex-

amine, but the shades were always drawn and the handsome draperies of damask and lace hung in such perfect folds she dared not disturb them.

Where was the charm of her father's stories of Friendship? Was it because her grandfather was dead that everything had changed? This was why her grandmother wore black dresses and added that heavy veil when she went out. Rosalind once drew a corner of it over her own face and the gloom appalled her.

She ventured to say one day as they drove along a pleasant country road, "Grandmamma, you don't know how bright the sunshine is," and Mrs. Whittredge replied, "I do not wish to know, Rosalind; nothing can ever again be bright to me." Yet if she would only look, she must see that it was bright. This was one puzzle.

Aunt Genevieve's manner was another. It was as if she scorned everything, and sometimes it made Rosalind almost angry.

On the day of her meeting with Maurice, she ate her lunch with a glance every few minutes at her great-uncle Allan on the opposite wall.

A very black portrait, it seemed only a meaningless blur till in a certain light the strong face and stern eyes shone out of the surrounding gloom with startling effect. She sometimes wondered rather anxiously if the uncle to whose home-coming she looked forward, could by any possibility be like the person for whom he was named. It was not an agreeable face, yet it drew her gaze with an irresistible attraction. She was convinced that on occasion the heavy brows contracted and the eyes grew even sterner.

In the next panel hung Matilda, his wife, as the massive marble in the cemetery said, — a youthful person with side curls and a comfortable smile.

Even with its southern windows the dining room was sombre in its massive furnishings of Flemish oak. Very different from the one at home, with its sunshine and flowers, its overflow of books from the study, and the odds and ends of pottery picked up by father and Cousin Louis in their travels.

Rosalind was thinking that the plain little room of the magician was the pleasantest place

she knew in Friendship, when Martin entered with something in his hand, announcing in his courtly way, "A book for Miss Rosalind." It seemed to her that Martin, with his grizzled head and dusky face, had the most beautiful manners ever seen.

"For me, Martin?" she exclaimed.

"The young gentleman from next door left it," said Martin.

"I did not know you knew any one next door, Rosalind," Mrs. Whittredge remarked questioningly.

"I am not very well acquainted, grandmamma," Rosalind answered, seeing suddenly in the handsome face a likeness to the dark portrait; "but I talked to Maurice through the hedge this morning. I remember now, I had my book. I must have left it on the grass."

"I believe Rosalind seldom loses an opportunity to speak to people. Miss Herbert says she is on quite intimate terms with Morgan," remarked Miss Genevieve.

"Father told me about Morgan," Rosalind began apologetically, adding more confidently, "I like to know people."

"Your father over again," Mrs. Whittredge said, smiling. "What is your book, dear?"

"'As You Like It.' Cousin Louis gave it to me." As she spoke Rosalind caught the glance exchanged by her grandmother and aunt.

"When I was a little girl Cousin Louis told me the story because it is about Rosalind, you know, and ever since I have called it my story, because I like it best of all."

No comment was made on this explanation, and it seemed to her the next time she looked in his direction, that Uncle Allan frowned.

When luncheon was over she went out to the garden seat under the birch, carrying with her an old green speller found in a bookcase upstairs. In the back of it she had discovered the deaf and dumb alphabet, so now she would not have to wait for Maurice to teach her; she could learn it by herself. It did not seem difficult. With the spelling book propped open in one corner of the bench she went carefully over it, and then tried to think of words she was most likely to want to use in talking with Morgan; but this was slower work, and the thought that for some unknown reason her grand-

mother was displeased with her kept claiming her attention.

When father was displeased with her — and this was not often — he always told her, and they talked it over frankly, but grandmamma and Aunt Genevieve only looked at each other and said nothing. It both puzzled her and hurt her dignity to be treated in this way.

Presently it occurred to her that her grandmother might have been vexed at her carelessness in leaving her book on the grass. It was careless; father would have said so. Well, she could let grandmamma know she was sorry, and feeling relieved at having found a possible solution of the problem, she closed the spelling book.

Mrs. Whittredge looked up in evident surprise when Rosalind entered the room and announced, "I am sorry I left my book on the grass, grandmamma."

"What do you mean, my dear?" she asked.

"I thought you didn't like it because I was careless."

"I suppose it was careless, my pet, but I had not thought of it. But tell me what makes you care so much for that book. It seems to me

there are many stories that would be more interesting to a little girl. Suppose you put it away and let me find you something else."

The color deepened in Rosalind's face. "It is my own, own book," she cried, clasping it to her heart.

"Very well, you need not be tragic about it," Mrs. Whittredge said coldly, turning to her writing.

Again Rosalind knew she had offended, and this time her resentment was aroused. "I don't like to be spoken to in that way," she told herself, as she walked from the room.

Before she had reached the head of the stairs her grandmother's voice called her back. Reluctantly she returned.

Mrs. Whittredge had risen and now came to meet her and put her arm around her, and her voice was soft and full of affection as she asked, "Do you want to go to the cemetery with me this afternoon, pet? Aunt Genevieve has the carriage, and I think a walk will do me good."

The walk along the shady street and through the grassy lane to the gate at the foot of the

hill was as pleasant as a walk could be that summer day. Rosalind kept sedately by her grandmother's side, and the face under the drooping hat was grave. Behind them walked Martin with some garden tools and a watering-pot.

The serious eyes brightened, and the lips curved into a smile at sight of Maurice and Katherine playing dominos under the maple. How lovely it must be to have a brother or sister to play with and talk to!

The cemetery was not new to Rosalind, for Mrs. Whittredge on her daily drive usually stopped there, and its winding paths and green slopes, its drooping willows and graceful oaks, and the flowers that bloomed everywhere, around the stately shafts of marble and the low headstones, seemed to her very pleasant. Here, however, her grandmother's sadness took on a deeper tinge as she moved among the mounds that lay in the shadow of the massive granite monument with "Whittredge" in letters of bronze at its base.

As Martin went to work trimming the ivy under his mistress's direction, Rosalind wandered away by herself across the hill-top, pausing

now and then to read an inscription and do a sum in subtraction, on the result of which her interest largely depended. "Lily, born 1878, died 1888," stirred her imagination, and she sat down to consider it at length. How old would Lily be now if she had lived? She tried to think how her own name would look on a stone. It was still and peaceful on that sunny hillside; it reminded her of "Sharon's lovely rose." The idea of a grave here was not unattractive. She was considering it pensively when her eyes fell on a long-stemmed, creamy rose, lying not far from her on the ground. With instant pleasure in its beauty she took it up and held it against her cheek.

Where had it come from? Some one must have dropped it. She stood up and looked around, but there was no one in sight. On the other side of a holly bush, however, a number of just such roses lay on a grave. Rosalind walked over and stooped to read the name on the low headstone. "Robert Ellis Fair," she repeated half aloud as she laid her rose beside the others.

When she lifted her head she met the sur-

prised gaze of a young lady, who came across the grass with a watering-pot in her hand. She was decidedly pretty to look at, and she smiled pleasantly as she began watering the flowers in an iron vase.

Rosalind felt she must explain, so she said, smiling in her turn, "I found a rose on the grass, and I thought it must belong here."

"Thank you. I suppose I dropped it. Won't you tell me who you are? I am sure you do not live in Friendship."

"No, I am visiting my grandmother. I am Rosalind Whittredge."

A strange expression crossed the face of the young lady at this announcement. Could it be that something displeased her? After a moment she spoke gravely, "I think some one is looking for you," she said.

Turning, Rosalind saw Martin in the distance, and as there seemed nothing else to do or say, she walked away. After she had gone some little distance she could not resist looking back, and just as she did so she saw the young lady fling something from her across the grass, and — it looked like a rose! Could it be her rose?

Rosalind felt her cheeks growing hot. How very strange! Here was a puzzle, indeed.

Aunt Genevieve had come for them in the carriage, and as they drove home Rosalind tried to describe the young lady she had seen, saying nothing about the rose, however.

"It must have been Celia Fair, mamma, don't you think so?" asked Genevieve.

"Fair was the name on the stone," said Rosalind, adding, "She was pretty."

Miss Whittredge looked at her mother, then as that lady was silent, she remarked, in her usual languid tone, "I think you may as well know, Rosalind, that we have nothing to do with the Fairs."

Why did it make any difference to Rosalind? Why did everything seem wrong? Why did she feel so unhappy in spite of the blue sky and the sweet summer air?

When they reached home she sat on the garden bench and looked up at the griffins, and the fancy floated through her mind that it might be comfortable to be as unfeeling as they.

"O, dear! I am afraid I am getting out of the Forest. What shall I do? Perhaps the magician could help me;" she clasped her hands

at the thought. Why not go to see him? She knew the way.

"I will take my book to show him," she said; and running to the house for it, forgetful of everything but her longing for sympathy, a few minutes later she flitted down the driveway and out of the gate.

CHAPTER SEVENTH.

THE MAGICIAN MAKES TEA.

"— If that love or gold
Can in this place buy entertainment,
Bring us where we may rest ourselves and feed;
Here's a young maid with travel much oppress'd
And faints for succour."

THE magician was at work in his small garden adjusting some wire netting for the sweet peas, while Curly Q. looked on with interest, and Crisscross finished his saucer of milk.

Rosalind came through the shop so softly that only the cat was aware of it. He gazed at her in evident doubt whether to continue work on the rim of his saucer or take refuge on the fence.

"I should like to have a little house, and a dog and cat to live with me," she thought, sitting down on the step to wait till she should

be observed. Yes, this was more like the Forest of Arden than any place she knew; her unhappiness seemed melting away in the peaceful atmosphere.

Crisscross decided she was not dangerous, and keeping an eye on her by way of precaution went on with his supper. It was not long, however, before Curly Q. discovered her presence and came bounding to her side, with a sharp bark of welcome, then back to call his master's attention.

"Why! Why!" exclaimed the magician, holding up a pair of rather grimy hands.

There could be no doubt about his being glad to see Rosalind. He asked how she was, over and over, and apologized for his hands, and smiled and nodded and indulged in all sorts of absurd gestures, which made her laugh so she couldn't try her new accomplishment of talking on her fingers. Directly he hurried into the house, where she could hear him washing his hands, and then he came out again with a tea-kettle, which he filled at the cistern, and carrying it back set it on a small oil stove, which he lighted.

"We'll have some tea," he said, sitting down beside her and asking again how she was.

Rosalind summoned all her learning and spelled out carefully, with the aid of some very dainty fingers, "I-am-lon—"

"Lonesome?" repeated the magician. "That is too bad. Mr. Pat wouldn't like that."

Rosalind shook her head. The tears were near the surface, but she kept them back, and remembering her book she laid it on the magician's knee, open at the words Cousin Louis had written: "If we choose we may travel always in the Forest where the birds sing and the sunlight sifts through the trees; where although we sometimes grow footsore and hungry we know that the goal is sure. Just outside is the dreary desert in which, alas! many choose to walk, shutting their eyes to the beauty and peace of the Forest, and losing by the way the sacred gift of happiness."

The magician read it slowly through, then he smiled at Rosalind over his glasses. "That's so," he said. "It is hard to keep out of the desert sometimes, but it all comes right in the end. Why, the other day I was—" here he shook

his head and put on a woe-begone expression of countenance that made his meaning plain, and caused Rosalind to laugh — "and I looked up and there you stood in the door and pointed to the motto, 'Good in everything,' and I felt better."

"Did I really cheer you up?" cried Rosalind, delighted; and nodding quite as if he heard, the magician answered, "Now I'll cheer you up." Rising, he beckoned her to follow him inside, and she obeyed, feeling as if she were somebody in a story.

The kettle was already singing merrily, and from a shelf the magician took down a fat little teapot and, rinsing it with boiling water, proceeded to make tea. Next he spread a white cloth on a small table, and from the cupboard took out some blue and white cups and plates.

"Let me set it," begged Rosalind, in pantomime, entering gayly into the spirit of the thing.

Laughing, the magician left it to her and went off to his store-room, from which he emerged with a pitcher of milk and a loaf of brown bread.

There was nothing in the appointments of this simple meal to offend the most fastidious taste,

and it was a sight to bring a smile to the dolefulest countenance, to see Rosalind and the magician sitting opposite to each other drinking tea. In the midst of it Morgan jumped up and went to the store-room, returning with a tumbler of jelly. "Miss Betty Bishop's jelly," he said. "Do you know Miss Betty?"

Rosalind shook her head.

"She makes good things," he added, as he unscrewed the top.

Rosalind's afternoon in the open air had given her an appetite, and she did full justice to the brown bread and jelly, the novelty of the occasion adding a flavor. Through the open door and window came the glow of the sunset, and the air was sweet with some far-off fragrance. All trouble had faded from her face; it was as if in the heart of the Forest she had come upon some friendly inn. Such a small matter as dinner in the house behind the griffins quite escaped her memory.

"Well, upon my word!"

Startled in the act of feeding Curly Q., Rosalind looked toward the door, and saw there a lady in a crisp, light muslin. More than this

"DO YOU KNOW MISS BETTY?"

she did not at once take in, for behind her in the semi-darkness of the shop was Martin's face. The conviction that he was looking for her, and that grandmamma would be vexed, overshadowed everything else. She rose, while the magician greeted the lady as Miss Betty, and offered her a cup of tea.

"I'se been searchin' high and low for you, Miss Rosalind," Martin exclaimed, coming forward.

"I'm dreadfully sorry, Martin; I forgot," said Rosalind.

Miss Betty, who had declined the tea, now held out her hand. "This is Rosalind Whittredge, of course; I am your Cousin Betty."

"I didn't know I had any cousins," said Rosalind.

"You will find a few if you stay long enough," replied Miss Betty. "How do you come to be eating supper with Morgan, I'd like to know? I was sitting on my porch when you went in, so when Martin came along I was able to help him."

"I like Morgan. I wanted to see him. Father told me about him." Rosalind felt she couldn't explain exactly.

"I used to know your father very well indeed," said Miss Betty, as they walked together to the street, after Rosalind had told the magician good-by. "As you seem to like going out to tea, I hope you will come and take supper with me sometime," she added, with a twinkle in her eye.

When she reached home Miss Herbert stood at the gate, and in the door was Mrs. Whittredge. Rosalind's face was full of brightness as she ran up the path.

"Grandmamma, I meant only to stay a minute, and then I forgot."

"I have been worried about you, Rosalind," Mrs. Whittredge said gravely. "Why did you not come to me and tell me where you wished to go? Where have you been?"

"To see the magician — Morgan, I mean. I wanted so much to see him I did not think of anything else."

"Why did you wish to see him?" continued her grandmother.

The glow was fading from Rosalind's face. "Because —" she hesitated, "because —"

"Well?"

"Because I was lonely, grandmamma, and I was afraid I was going to cry. I promised father I would be brave, and — well — Morgan knows about the Forest, and is very good to cheer you up. He made tea in the dearest little teapot, and it was so amusing, I forgot. I am sorry."

"Do you mean you took supper with Morgan? Well, Rosalind, you are amazing!" Aunt Genevieve spoke from the hall.

"Never mind, Genevieve," said her mother. "I am sorry you were lonely, Rosalind, but I do not understand why you should go to Morgan. And what do you mean by the 'forest'?"

Rosalind's face was grave again. "I don't know, grandmamma," she faltered, and indeed she could not have told if her life had depended on it.

"I think you were very easy on her, mamma. It was certainly naughty of her to run away," Genevieve remarked, after Rosalind, worn out by the conflicting experiences of the day, had gone to bed.

Mrs. Whittredge did not reply at once. On her lap lay her granddaughter's little volume of

"As You Like It," and she had been reading the words about the Forest. It had a way of opening to that page.

"She is a peculiar, fanciful child, and quite old enough to know better. Professor Sargent may be a brilliant man, but it seems to me he has filled the child's head full of nonsense. I can't see what Patterson has been thinking of," Genevieve continued.

"I am not inclined to find much fault with her. I did not expect her to be perfect. She seems naturally sweet and happy," her mother replied.

"Losing by the way the sacred gift of happiness," Mrs. Whittredge's eyes went back to the book. Surely happiness had slipped from her grasp, leaving nothing but regret. It was sad to realize that her children found all their pleasure apart from her. Somewhere she had failed, but pride told her it was fate; that sorrow and disappointment were the common lot, that gratitude was not to be looked for.

After her bitter disappointment in her oldest son she had been the more determined to have her way with Allan. With what result? The

extended tour abroad, planned with a purpose just as his college course was ended, had weaned him completely from his home. His interests were elsewhere, and although as joint executor with her of his father's estate he was often in Friendship, his visits were usually brief. Between herself and her daughter there was little sympathy. Genevieve, calm and inflexible, had early declared her independence. But more than all else put together was her haunting sorrow for her husband. Words of Dr. Fair, spoken long ago in cruel bluntness, still rang in her ears: "Madam, you are killing your husband by your obstinacy." Her mind dwelt with morbid persistency upon them. Had the reconciliation with her son come too late?

At a time of utter weariness with herself she acceded to Patterson's proposal to send his daughter to her. Genevieve had expostulated, insisting she would be impossible, a child with no bringing up. Rosalind had come, and even Genevieve had to admit, so far as manners and appearance were concerned, she was not impossible.

In the fair young face, with its serious eyes, in whose glance there was often a singular radiance, Mrs. Whittredge found something that touched her heart. Her granddaughter had not the Whittredge beauty, she was nothing of a Whittredge, and yet — One day she had taken up the miniature on Rosalind's table, with a glance over her shoulder; and when she put it down and turned away, it was with the reluctant feeling that perhaps there had been some excuse for her son when he left father and mother and kindred and home for this young girl.

CHAPTER EIGHTH.

TO MEET ROSALIND.

"Put you in your best array."

MISS Betty Bishop lived in a small white house with brown trimmings, which she herself likened to a white cake with chocolate filling. Everything about it was snug and neat and seemed to the observer a pleasant expression of that kindly, busy, cheery lady; but Miss Betty was in the habit of declaring it had taken her twenty years to get settled in those small, low-ceiled rooms, and that she didn't feel quite in yet.

There had been a great sacrifice of fine old furniture when the big house on Main Street had to be exchanged for the little one in Church Lane, and it was no wonder Miss Betty sighed at the thought. None the less she had accepted courageously the reverses which at twenty brought her gay girlhood to an end, and

for fifteen years was a cheerful, devoted nurse to her invalid father. Since his death she lived alone with only Sophy, her old mammy, to cook and care for her.

When it became known that Miss Betty had invited certain of her young friends to tea to meet Rosalind Whittredge, a wave of excitement swept over Friendship.

All the children of the town had heard stories of Miss Betty's beauty and belleship, but those Washington winters belonged to twenty years ago and had no connection with her present popularity. Sophy's skill as a cook no doubt had something to do with the fame of her mistress's tea parties, but besides this Miss Betty knew how to make her guests, whether young or old, have a good time.

When asked if she was fond of children, she was sure to reply, "Some children. I don't like disagreeable children any better than I do disagreeable grown persons." And for this reason, perhaps, it had come to be esteemed something of an honor to be asked to her house.

Miss Betty had at first felt a prejudice against Patterson Whittredge's daughter, deciding in her

own mind that she was probably a spoiled little thing; but the sight of Rosalind taking tea with Morgan, and more than this, the frank gaze of those disarming gray eyes, had touched her kindly heart. She knew as well as anybody that it must be lonely in the Whittredge house; and so she had thought of the tea party.

The interest felt in Patterson Whittredge's daughter was very general. Patterson belonged to those old times when peace had reigned in Friendship. He had been a favorite in the village, and to many it seemed only the other day that he had gone away. It was incredible that this tall girl seen walking by Mrs. Whittredge's side could be his daughter. There were those like Mrs. Graham's pupils, who were inclined to invest her with a halo of romance; others criticised her as not at all the Whittredge style, not what one had a right to expect in Mrs. Whittredge's granddaughter. Some pitied Mrs. Whittredge for the responsibility thrust upon her, others pitied Rosalind, and still more, envied her.

In view of all the discussion, it was not possible to regard an invitation to meet her as quite an everyday matter.

"I do wish you had not soiled your embroidered muslin, Belle. You will have to wear your summer silk," said Mrs. Parton, addressing her daughter, who sat on the dining-room floor entertaining a Maltese kitten with a string and spool.

"I forgot to tell you, mother, Jack dropped some wax candle on it last Sunday night, when we were looking for a penny in the grass," Belle replied, lifting her merry black eyes for a moment. "Anyway, it isn't a dress-up party — only to supper."

"Bring that dress to me at once. I am astonished at you. The only decent thing you have!" Mrs. Parton sat down and clasped her hands in an attitude of desperation.

Followed by the kitten, Belle departed, returning directly with the blue and white checked silk over her arm.

"Whatever it is," her mother continued, I want you to look nice; Betty says Rosalind Whittredge has beautiful clothes."

"I just know she is a prig," remarked Belle, caressing the kitten.

"No, she isn't!" A tumbled head and a pair of eyes very like Belle's own peered out suddenly

from beneath the table cover. "If she was, she wouldn't have run away to take supper with Morgan."

"Mercy upon us, Jack! you are enough to startle the sphinx. Come out from under that table at once," commanded his mother.

"Did she do that?" asked Belle, with some interest, adding, "Is it very bad, mother? Can you clean it? How do you know she did, Jack?"

Mrs. Parton shook her head; "I'll try French chalk," she said.

"Miss Betty said so. She saw her," put in Jack.

Mrs. Parton rose. "Another time when you lose a penny, I will make it good rather than have your best dress spoiled," she remarked.

"But you see, mother, it was a church penny," Belle explained, as if she were mentioning some rare and peculiar coin. "Arthur brought the collection home because Uncle Ranney wasn't there, and when he untied his handkerchief on the porch a penny dropped out and rolled into the grass."

"Who is going to Miss Betty's?" Jack asked, as his mother left the room.

"Maurice and Katherine and you and me, and the Ellises, and — I don't know who."

"I know it will be stupid; I don't think I'll go."

"If it is stupid, you will make it so," retorted his sister, adding, "and you will go, too, for mother will make you; besides, you know you wouldn't miss Sophy's waffles." Belle departed with the kitten, leaving Jack to return to the latest Henty book and his retreat under the table.

The Partons' was a square house, with a wide hall dividing it through the middle and opening on a porch at either end. When the weather at all permitted, these doors stood wide open, and dogs and cats and children ran in and out as they pleased. In the afternoons Colonel Parton sat on the front porch smoking and reading, threatening the dogs and the children indiscriminately, receiving not the slightest attention from either.

As she passed him now, Belle mischievously deposited the kitten on his shoulder.

"You baggage, you! Take this thing off me," thundered the colonel, as the kitten made

its claws felt in a frantic endeavor to hold on in its perilous position.

"O father! don't hurt her," Belle cried, running to the rescue, and in the scuffle that followed, the unfortunate kitten escaped.

"Don't you let me catch you doing a thing like that again," scolded the colonel, as he picked up his paper and settled himself in his chair again.

Belle laughed, and held up her face for a kiss, which her father gave with a hearty good will.

Mrs. Parton was not the only one who felt dress to be a matter of importance on this occasion. Charlotte Ellis stopped at the bank gate to ask Katherine what she was going to wear.

"My blue lawn, I think," Katherine answered. "Mother says it is nice enough, and that I must keep my new white dress for Commencement."

"Your blue dress is very pretty, I am sure," Charlotte said. She was two years older than Katherine, and her manner was mildly patronizing. "I think I shall wear white. Of course

it is not a party, but we want to make a good impression on a stranger."

Katherine felt the force of this, but Maurice, who overheard Charlotte, was inclined to jeer. "Much difference it will make to her what you have on," he said, as Charlotte left them. "Her," meant Rosalind.

"How do you know it won't make any difference?" asked Katherine.

"Because she is not that kind."

"What kind? How do you know?"

Now Maurice had kept his interview with Rosalind to himself, saying nothing to any one when he returned her book. His sudden interest in Shakespeare had not passed unnoticed; but as this or something else had caused longer intervals of cheerfulness, the family had not ventured to disturb the agreeable change by asking questions.

"I know, because I talked to her the other day," he replied.

"Maurice, really?" cried Katherine. "I don't believe it."

"You needn't if you don't want to," was her brother's lofty answer.

On the appointed evening the guest of honor was the last to arrive, and the others were in such a state of expectancy they could not settle down to an examination of Miss Betty's puzzle drawer with which she usually entertained her young guests until supper was announced. Miss Betty, who adored puzzles and problems of all kinds, was continually adding to her collection, and this evening there was a brand new one, brought from the city only the day before; but even Belle, who was especially good at puzzles, and besides affected not to care about Rosalind Whittredge, could not keep her eyes from the window.

The application of French chalk had been successful, and she wore her blue and white silk; Katherine, in her blue muslin, with ribbons to match on her smooth braids, wished her mother had been more impressed with the importance of the occasion. Charlotte was complacent in her white dress with a large ribbon bow on top of her head, in a new fashion just received from her cousin in Baltimore.

"That's the way Rosalind wears hers," whispered Katherine.

The boys fingered the puzzles and talked about the ball game to be played to-morrow, but they shared the feeling of anticipation. Their hostess bustled back and forth.

"Children," she said, pausing in the door, "I want you to be as nice as possible to Rosalind. Remember she is a stranger, and we wish her to have a pleasant impression of Friendship."

"Here she is!" announced Belle, and the rest crowded around the window.

"There's Miss Genevieve," whispered Charlotte; "girls, she is coming in!"

The Whittredge carriage had stopped before the gate and Miss Genevieve, a marvel of grace in soft chiffons that rippled and curled about her slender height and emphasized the fairness of her skin, was actually escorting her niece to the door.

"Isn't she lovely?" sighed Charlotte, in an ecstasy.

"Not so sweet as Miss Celia," said loyal Belle.

Miss Betty met them on the porch, while her guests in the parlor craned their necks to catch a glimpse, through the open door, of the new

arrivals. The languid sweetness of Miss Genevieve's tone floated in above Miss Betty's crisper utterance.

"Mamma is just as usual, thank you. Yes, it was very kind of you to ask her; I have no doubt she finds it dull. Yes, we expect Allan in a week or two, but there is no counting on him."

So absorbed were the listeners, they did not begin their retreat soon enough, and their hostess, ushering Rosalind in, encountered a scene of confusion. Katherine in the excitement fell backward over a footstool and was rescued, flushed and shamefaced, by Jack Parton. Charlotte smoothed her dress and tried to look dignified. Belle and Maurice were in fits of laughter.

Miss Betty surveyed them in surprise. Rosalind stood beside her, and the girls at once noted that she wore pink.

"Is anything the matter?" asked Miss Betty, observing Katherine's flushed face. "I want to introduce Rosalind Whittredge to you. Rosalind, this is Charlotte Ellis, and Katherine Roberts, and Belle Parton —"

Still laughing, Belle held out her hand. "We were peeping at you," she said.

"Didn't you know I was coming in?" Rosalind asked, a gleam of fun in her own eyes.

"We wanted to see Miss Genevieve," added Belle.

As Miss Betty proceeded to name the boys, Rosalind said, "Oh, I know Maurice," quite as if he were an old friend; and she added, standing beside him, "I am so much obliged to you for bringing my book home."

"Does Maurice know her?" whispered Belle.

Katherine nodded, although she had had her doubts until this minute.

Maurice was agreeably conscious of Belle's eyes as he talked to Rosalind. He was not at all unwilling to have the distinction of being the only one to know the new-comer.

"I read the story," he said. "I did not know till after you had gone that it was one of Shakespeare's plays. We read Julius Cæsar at school last winter."

"I know that too," Rosalind answered. I have Lamb's stories. Cousin Louis used to read them to me, and then from the real plays, but I like the story of the Forest best."

"Dear me! they are talking about Shakespeare," Belle exclaimed.

Rosalind looked across the room at her, and smiled in a way that seemed an invitation.

"It is a little funny for her to sit down beside a boy the first thing, don't you think?" Charlotte said in a low tone to Katherine, who assented because she was in the habit of agreeing with Charlotte.

Belle overheard. "Silly!" she said, and to show her scorn she went over and sat on an arm of the sofa beside Rosalind.

"Do you like to read?" she asked.

Rosalind opened her eyes. "Of course I do, don't you?"

Belle, who had browsed in her father's library since she had learned her letters, was known as a great reader, and felt rather proud of her reputation; but she found the stranger had read as much as she, and seemed to think nothing of it.

In the warmth of a discussion of favorite stories any stiffness is sure to melt rapidly away. Jack, hearing mention of "The Talisman," joined in and the others drew up their chairs, so that when Miss Betty rustled back from an excursion to the dining room she found the ice broken and

sociability prevailing. But she startled them all by an exclamation.

"Jack Parton, for pity's sake, sit up! and you too, Katherine; I cannot allow my guests to sit on their spines."

"But it is so much more comfortable," protested lazy Jack, slowly screwing himself into a more erect position, while Katherine straightened up with a blush.

"There seems to be something wrong with the spines of this generation, and the first thing you know it will react on their mental and moral natures. People without backbone are odious," Miss Betty continued.

"I wish you children could have seen Miss Patricia Gilpin as I saw her once when I was a little child, more than thirty years ago. She was straight as an arrow and pretty as a picture. Such old ladies have gone out of fashion. I remember hearing her describe the backboard and spiked collar she wore for several hours each day when she was a child."

"What was the spiked collar for?" Rosalind asked.

"To keep her head in the correct position."

"I am glad I didn't live then," said Belle.

At this point Miss Betty's sermon was interrupted by the appearance of a small, brown boy in a white apron, who announced supper.

L. of C.

CHAPTER NINTH.

THE LOST RING.

"Wear this for me."

THE old mahogany table had never reflected a circle of brighter faces than gathered about it that evening to do justice to Sophy's good things served on Miss Betty's pretty china.

Rosalind at the left hand of her hostess looked around the company with frank enjoyment of the novelty of the occasion. These young people were very entertaining, particularly Belle; and more amusing than anything was the small waiter, at whom Miss Betty glanced so sternly when he showed a disposition to laugh at the jokes.

It was when Miss Betty began to serve the strawberries that some one remarked on the old cream-pitcher of colonial glass, and thus started her on her favorite topic of the cream-

jug and sugar-dish that exactly matched her teapot and should have been hers.

This was the first time Rosalind had heard mention of old Mr. Gilpin and the will.

"My grandmother and Cousin Thomas's mother were sisters," Miss Betty explained, "and when their father and mother died the family silver was divided between them. In this way the teapot came down to me, and some of the other pieces to Cousin Anne, who was, you know, Cousin Thomas's sister."

"Was old Mr. Gilpin related to me, Cousin Betty?" asked Rosalind.

"Why, certainly, my dear; it is time you were learning about your relations. He was your grandfather's own cousin. Your great-grandmother was Mary Gilpin before she married Mr. Whittredge."

"Rosalind looks puzzled," said Belle, laughing.

Rosalind laughed too. "I never knew about relations before. Does father know all this?"

"I should hope so; this is not much to know."

"Miss Betty, you promised to tell us about the ring, sometime; Rosalind would like to hear

it, I am sure. Wouldn't you, Rosalind?" asked Belle.

Rosalind wished very much to hear it, and Miss Betty, with a glance around the table, remarked, "I shall be glad to tell what I know if you care to have me, and Jack will sit up."

"Send for a pillow, Miss Betty; that is what mother does," Belle suggested, to the delight of the small waiter, who was compelled to retire suddenly to the hall, where he was heard giggling.

"As some of you know," Miss Betty began, "the ring belonged to Miss Patricia Gilpin, who was an aunt of Cousin Thomas's, and your great-great-aunt, Rosalind. If it is still in existence, it is not far from eighty years old. You might suppose from the way in which they are spoken of now, that in the early part of the century all young women were beauties and belles; but if there is any truth in her miniature, Patricia Gilpin was a really beautiful woman."

"Wasn't she married? I thought it was an engagement ring," said Charlotte.

"It was, but she never married. The young naval officer to whom she was engaged was

killed in the War of 1812. They had known each other only a short time; it was love at first sight, I suppose. He had the ring made for her, and I always heard that she received it and the news of his death at nearly the same time. The last message she had from him was, 'Wear this for me,' which he had written on a card and enclosed with the ring; and she always wore it. She was a girl of eighteen at the time, and greatly admired; but she never forgot her lover."

"Did she live in Friendship?" Rosalind asked.

"During her father's lifetime this was her home. She was born in the old Gilpin house, which was new then; and perhaps you know that the rustic summer-house at the top of the hill on the left is called Patricia's arbor. For some years after her lover's death she lived in seclusion, seeing no one; and always when the weather permitted she would sit in the arbor, looking out upon the river.

"It was said that this was the scene of their courtship, but it may be only a story.

"After her father's death she lived in Washington, but she often visited Cousin Anne in the

old place. As I have said, I remember seeing her and hearing her talk, when I was a child of six or seven. She was a stately and beautiful old lady, and as I recall it now, her face showed she had borne her share of trouble and disappointment bravely; and you can't say more than that for anybody."

"That is what Cousin Louis says," remarked Rosalind, smiling at Maurice.

"But you haven't told us what the ring was like," put in Charlotte.

"I never could tell a straight story," replied Miss Betty, laughing. "Well, it was a broad band of open lace-work of a most delicate and beautiful pattern, and made of pure gold. The stone was an oval sapphire of great depth and purity of color, in a setting of tiny stars, made of little points of gold. When Miss Patricia died she left the ring to Cousin Anne, her niece, along with many other valuable things. Cousin Anne never wore it, but she used to show it to me sometimes as a great treat, and I have tried it on more than once. Cousin Anne ought to have made a will; but at best she was an undecided person, and she had a long illness.

It was generally supposed she would leave it to your aunt Genevieve, Rosalind, or else to Patricia Marshall. Indeed, there were half a dozen of them who would have given their heads for it. Cousin Anne knew it, and she hated to disappoint anybody, so she ended by disappointing everybody."

"Why didn't she leave it to you, Miss Betty?" asked Jack.

"Miss Patricia was not related to me. She was aunt to Cousin Thomas and Cousin Anne on their father's side, and I am connected through the Barnwells, his mother's family, just as Rosalind's grandmother is," she explained; adding, "As Cousin Anne left no will, everything she owned went to her brother; and you have all heard about his will. Most of his money was to go to the endowment of a hospital, all the other property to be sold and the proceeds divided among his first cousins or their children, except the ring and an old spinet that came to him through his wife. The first he left to Allan Whittredge, the other to Celia Fair."

"To Uncle Allan?" asked Rosalind, greatly interested.

"Yes, and everybody wonders why. However, when they came to take an inventory, the ring was not to be found."

"And they haven't the least idea what became of it," remarked Maurice.

"I think it was stolen," said Miss Betty, "although I acknowledge there is something mysterious about it. Cousin Thomas was subject to attacks of heart failure, and was found one evening unconscious in his arm-chair before the open door of the safe, where he kept his valuables. Morgan had left him an hour before, apparently as well as usual. He was discovered in this condition by old Milly, who is honest as the day, and she sent at once for Dr. Fair, next door, but it was some time before he could be found, and in the excitement it seems quite possible the ring might have been stolen. After Dr. Fair had partially revived the old man, he noticed the open safe and closed it. Cousin Thomas never regained consciousness entirely, and died the next day. It must have been a week before the ring was missed. The strange thing is that there were jewels of greater value in the safe, which were not disturbed."

"Don't you wish your uncle would give it to you if it is found?" Charlotte asked Rosalind.

"In his will Mr. Gilpin said he left the ring to Allan, who was aware of his wishes in regard to it. I have no idea what those wishes were, but I hardly think he had Rosalind in mind," Miss Betty said, smiling.

"Uncle Allan must know what he meant. How strange!"

"Like a story, isn't it?" said Belle.

"Have they looked everywhere for it?" continued Rosalind.

"Yes; the most thorough search has been made, to no effect."

The rest of the evening was spent in games, and from the laughing that went on, Miss Betty's guests must have enjoyed themselves. When Martin came for her and Rosalind said good night to her new friends, she did not feel like the same girl who had had to go to the magician to be cheered a few days ago. The face she lifted to the stars as she walked home was very bright indeed.

Grandmamma and Aunt Genevieve sat in the hall.

"Have you had a pleasant time?" Mrs. Whittredge asked.

"A beautiful time, grandmamma. I do like to know people. And Miss Betty — I mean Cousin Betty — told us about the lost ring and — was she my aunt? — Patricia? Did you ever see her, grandmamma?"

"Yes, a number of times. She visited at our house when I was a child. She died a few years after my marriage. Your Aunt Genevieve is thought to resemble the miniature done of her in her girlhood."

Rosalind looked in the direction of the arm-chair where her aunt half reclined, her eyes on a book, her clear profile in relief against the dark leather, the mellow lamp-light bringing out the copper tints in her hair. "Then I know she must have been lovely," she said.

Mrs. Whittredge laughed, and Genevieve lifted her eyes to ask, "What is that?"

"Rosalind is sure Patricia Gilpin must have been handsome if you resemble her," her mother replied.

Genevieve shrugged her shoulders, and her lips curled a little, although she smiled; "Thank you, Rosalind," she said.

"I don't believe," thought Rosalind, as she slowly prepared for bed, "that Miss Patricia — Aunt Patricia — looked as if she didn't care about anything. She bore hard things bravely, Miss Betty said, and I believe people who do that have a kind look." Here her glance fell upon the miniature on her dressing-table. The sweet eyes smiled on her. Taking it up she pressed it to her lips; "Like you, my dear beautiful," she whispered.

CHAPTER TENTH.

CELIA.

"One out of suits with fortune."

"O CELIA!" called Miss Betty Bishop, from her front door, "come in a minute. I had a tea party last night, and I want to send your mother some of Sophy's marshmallow cake. I am so glad you happened by," she added, as Celia came up the walk, "I was wondering how I should get it to her."

"It is very kind of you, Miss Betty," said Celia, following her into the dining room.

"There is no kindness about it," asserted Miss Betty, opening the cake box. "I am just proud of Sophy's good things and like to make other people envy me."

"That is not hard," Celia answered, thinking that life seemed easy and pleasant in this snug little house. Miss Betty had had her hard times, she knew, but the troubles of others are

apt to seem easier to bear than one's own, just as in bad weather the best walking is always on the other side of the street.

Celia was warm and tired, and the dim, cool room was grateful to her as she sat resting in silence while Miss Betty fluttered back and forth.

"Perhaps you'll think I'd better mind my own business," she said, returning after a moment's absence, "but here is something I saw in the *Gazette*. It might be worth trying."

Celia knew by heart the advertisement held out to her. "Work at home. Fifteen dollars a week made with ease, etc." She accepted it meekly, however, not wishing to hurt her friend's feelings.

"Talking about minding your own business," continued Miss Betty, "in my experience it does not pay. I once saw Cousin Anne Gilpin looking at taffeta at Moseley's, and I knew as well as I knew my name that the piece she selected wouldn't wear. At first I thought I'd tell her; then I decided it was none of my business,— Cousin Anne was old enough to know about the quality of silk. And what do you think?

She sent me a waist pattern off it for a Christmas gift!"

Celia laughed as she rose to go. "Thank you for the cake, even if it isn't a kindness. Mother will enjoy it," she said.

"You haven't noticed my hall paper," Miss Betty remarked, escorting her visitor to the door. "I don't expect you to say it is pretty, for it isn't. I have to confess wall paper is too much for me. This entry is so small I could not put anything big and bright on it, so I thought I was getting the very thing when I selected this, — and what does it look like? Nothing in the world but a clean calico dress. Now it is done I see it would have been better with plain paper."

"It is clean and unobtrusive," Celia agreed, smiling. Her smiles were a little forced this morning, it was easy to see; and Miss Betty, laying a kind hand on her arm, said, "Don't worry too much, Celia. I know something about hard times, and you will work through after a while."

Celia felt the tears rising, and she left Miss Betty with an abruptness that made her ashamed

of herself as she recalled it. After the exertion of climbing the hill she stopped to rest on the rustic seat just inside her own gate. "I wonder," she asked herself, "if there is anything much harder to bear than seeing a house you love going to ruin and not to be able to save it."

A branch of the honeysuckle that twined about the gate-post touched her shoulder, as if to remind her there was still some sweetness in life after all; but she did not heed it, nor the rose vines and clematis which made the old gray house beautiful in spite of needed repairs. Celia saw only rotting woodwork and sagging steps. She thought how the flower garden had been her father's pride, and how in his spare moments, few as they were, he was sure to be found digging and trimming and training, with the happiness of the born gardener. Ah, those days! She remembered the half-incredulous wonder with which she had been used to hear people speak of the certainty of trouble. She had felt so certain that joy overbalanced sorrow, that smiles were more frequent than tears. Now she understood, since she had tried to hide her own grief under a smiling face.

From her babyhood she had been her father's companion and confidante, driving about the country with him, interested in all that concerned his large practice. A warm-hearted, impulsive man, open handed to the point of extravagance, Dr. Fair had had few enemies and many friends; and loving his work, life had been full of joy to him. In contrast with those happy years the bitterness of his last days seemed doubly cruel to Celia. Whenever she was tired and discouraged, the memory of that dark time rose before her.

She had been only a child when Patterson Whittredge left home, but she could remember how warmly her father had taken his side, and how this had caused the first coolness between him and his boyhood friend, Judge Whittredge. The judge was influenced by his wife, and between the stubborn doctor and imperious Mrs. Whittredge there had been no love lost.

The storm had passed after a while, and when the judge's health began to fail Dr. Fair had been called in. But Mrs. Whittredge had not forgotten, and the doctor's position was not an easy one. Only his devotion to his old friend

had kept him from giving up the case at the beginning. The Gilpin will and her father's testimony to the old man's sanity had added to the trouble, and upon this had come the accusation which, whispered about, had broken the doctor's heart. Harassed by the hard times and the failure of investments, denied a place at the bedside of his friend, he had fallen an easy victim to pneumonia, outliving Judge Whittredge only a few days. The memory of it lay like lead upon Celia's heart.

"I have left you nothing but a heritage of misfortune, Celia," had been his last words to her.

"Don't think of that, father; I'll manage," she answered; and she had tried, but the solving of the problem was costing her the bloom of her youth. There were the two brothers to be educated, and a delicate, almost invalid mother to be cared for, and an income that would little more than pay the taxes on their home. To sell or rent it was not at present practicable, and she could not take boarders, for no one boarded in Friendship. Neither could she leave to try her fortune in the city, so she had been doing

whatever her hand found to do. Sewing, embroidering, a little teaching, and, in season, pickling and preserving. Friends had been kind, but Celia was proud and determined to fight her own battle, and sometimes, as this morning, kindness made her burden seem harder to bear.

The worst of it was the root of bitterness in her heart. She could never forgive Mrs. Whittredge. Few guessed the intensity hidden beneath Celia's gentle manner. Only now and then a spark from her dark blue eyes revealed it. The general construction put upon her proud reserve was that she was unsociable.

There is no loneliness like that of the unforgiving heart. Celia had never felt it so strongly as after her meeting with Rosalind Whittredge in the cemetery. There had been something in the soft gaze of the gray eyes that she could not forget. It had made her take up the rose again after she flung it away and carry it home with her.

But she must not linger here any longer. There was an order from the Exchange in the city which should be promptly filled if she hoped

for others. As she rose she confronted Morgan entering the gate.

"Good morning," he said, and there was an odd sort of embarrassment in his manner as he added, "Some of your window frames need fixing, Miss Celia."

She smiled and shook her head. "Can't afford it."

"Miss Celia, let me do it. I've lots of time, and the doctor was very good to me," he said.

Again Celia shook her head, but the hurt look on Morgan's face made her relent. "Well, perhaps the worst ones," she spelled. She would trust to being able to make it up to him sometime.

"That's right," he exclaimed, joyfully, adding, as he turned to go, "Don't you worry, Miss Celia. There's good in it somewhere."

CHAPTER ELEVENTH.

MAKING FRIENDS.

"Is not that neighborly?"

MISS BETTY'S tea party was the beginning of a new and happier state of affairs for Rosalind; one pleasant thing followed another. There were letters from the travellers, long and delightful and full of the genial spirit of the Forest, making her more than ever certain that they and she were alike journeying beneath its shelter, and at some turn of the road would surely meet again.

Mrs. Whittredge also had a letter. "I trust you will not keep Rosalind secluded," her son wrote. "I want her to have companions of her own age, and to learn to know and love the old town as I loved it. She has lived too much with Louis and me and story books; it is time she was waking up."

This explains why the Roberts children and

the Partons received special invitations to call on Rosalind. Friendship began to seem to her a very different place as her acquaintance with it grew and neighborly relations were established with Maurice and Katherine. The gap in the hedge became a daily meeting-place, and grew slowly, but steadily, wider.

A few days after the tea party, Katherine asked Rosalind to go out to the creek with her, and on the way they stopped for Belle. While she went to find her hat, Rosalind made the acquaintance of the colonel and several dogs. Then the three strolled along the wide street, under the shade of tall maples, past pleasant gardens and inviting houses, until the street turned into a country road, and before them was Red Hill and the little bridge over Friendly Creek at its foot.

Under the bridge the water rippled and splashed over the stones, and out of sight, back somewhere among the trees, it could be heard rushing over a dam. The children seated themselves on a bit of pebbly beach.

"How nice to be near the real country!" Rosalind exclaimed. "At home we are near the

park, but that is not the real country. We have to go miles to get there."

"But there are such lovely stores and things in the city," said Katherine.

"Still, you can't go about by yourself, as you can here," Rosalind answered; and Belle added, "I like to go to the city for a little while, but I'd rather live in Friendship, where the houses aren't so close together."

As they sat there, throwing stones in the water and writing in the sand, Rosalind heard a great deal about school, which would close next week, — how the girls had rushed to the window to see her and had lost their recess, and how Belle had been sent to the office, besides, for making chalk dishes. It was all very amusing, but she could not understand why the girls wanted to see her.

"Well, you know they are all interested in your house, and in Miss Genevieve; and then everybody was surprised at your coming to visit your grandmother."

"I can't see why," Rosalind said, opening her eyes.

"Oh, well — because you never had before,

you know." Belle's manner was hesitating, as if she felt conscious of being on dangerous ground.

What she said was certainly true. Rosalind herself did not exactly understand it. She knew only that there had been some reason why her father had not visited his old home for many years. She wondered if these girls knew more about it than she.

"You see, you are something new," Belle added, laughing. "Didn't Miss Celia scold us that morning, Katherine?"

"Why, no, Belle, she didn't exactly scold," said Katherine.

"She didn't throw back her head and frown and say 'Young ladies, I am amazed!'—here Bell gave an excellent imitation of Mrs. Graham's manner—"so you don't call it scolding. She just said, 'Girls, I don't know what to think!' and we felt as mean! I love Miss Celia."

"So do I," echoed Katherine.

"Is she one of your teachers?" Rosalind asked.

"Yes; she is Miss Celia Fair. She teaches drawing and sometimes keeps study hour, and

she is as sweet as she can be," Belle concluded, with enthusiasm.

The name brought to mind one of Rosalind's greatest puzzles, — the hillside, the young lady who looked as if she might be as Belle described her — sweet; the strange incident of the rose, and Aunt Genevieve's words, "We have nothing to do with the Fairs."

"I saw her once," she remarked gravely.

"I forgot the Fairs and the Whittredges don't speak. Perhaps you know about it," said Belle.

Rosalind shook her head.

"I think it was about the will; wasn't it, Katherine? Mrs. Whittredge wanted to break it because she thought Mr. Gilpin was crazy, but Dr. Fair said he wasn't, and testified in court."

Rosalind listened with interest. "Isn't Dr. Fair dead?" she asked.

"Yes. He used to be our doctor, and I liked him so much."

"The Fairs have lost all their money now, so Miss Celia has to teach and do all sorts of things," Katherine remarked.

"Her name belongs to the Forest," thought

Rosalind, looking at the ripples. Belle had thrown herself back and was gazing at the sky from under her hat brim; Katherine was busy with a collection of pebbles; the stillness was broken only by the hum of insects and the murmur of Friendly Creek. Suddenly Rosalind seemed to hear with perfect distinctness what it said,

"Be fr-ie-nds, be fr-ie-nds," with a little trill on the words.

From experience she knew very little of unfriendliness. All this about quarrels and having nothing to do with people was new to her. As she considered it she remembered that Oliver hated Orlando, and Rosalind's uncle had treated her and her father unkindly, in the story. "But it all came right in the end," she told herself, "when they met in the Forest." It was a cheering thought, and she smiled over it.

"What are you smiling at?" Belle asked, sitting up.

Rosalind's eyes had a far-away look as she replied, "I was thinking about the Forest."

"What forest?" Belle began to ask, when a curly dog rushed down upon them, and on the

bridge above their heads they saw the magician waving his hand.

"Well, Curly Q. How are you?" cried Rosalind.

"There's Morgan," said Belle; "you know him, don't you?"

"Of course I do. I took tea with him last week," Rosalind answered, laughing.

"And, Belle, she calls him the 'magician,'" Katherine said.

"Do you? Why?"

"Because he is one. Didn't you know it?" Rosalind danced up the slope, with Curly Q. after her.

"Rosalind says you are a magician. Are you?" Belle spelled rapidly when they had joined Morgan on the bridge.

The old man's eyes twinkled as he replied, "That's a secret; you mustn't tell anybody."

"Ask him if he knows about the Forest," said Rosalind.

Belle asked the question.

Morgan laughed. "'Where the birds sing—'" he quoted.

"Tell me about it, please," begged Belle. "Does Katherine know?"

Rosalind promised she would sometime; and as Katherine did not know either, and as it was growing late, Belle agreed to wait.

It was rather an odd and pleasant sight, if any one had stopped to think of it — the old man with his bright, wistful eyes, his tool box on his shoulder, and his three companions, walking home together. Demure Katherine, dainty Rosalind, saucy Belle, — all as merry as merry could be, — and Curly Q. running in and out among them in an ecstasy of delight, and at imminent danger of upsetting somebody.

"Well, Pigeon, how do you like your new friend?" asked the colonel, as his daughter took her seat beside him on the door-step.

Belle gazed thoughtfully across the lawn. "I like her," she answered, "but she is funny. I suppose it is because she hasn't gone much to school. She isn't like Charlotte, or Katherine, or me. She isn't prim, and yet — it is queer, father, but she makes me feel as I do when I am with Miss Celia — like behaving."

The colonel laughed his hearty ha, ha! "I hope you'll cultivate her society," he said, adding, "she is like Pat, as high-toned a fellow

as ever lived. He was something of a dreamer, too, and this child has the eyes of a poet."

"They are gray," remarked Belle. "But I know what you mean, father; she looks as if she saw things far away. She was looking so this afternoon, and when I asked her what she was thinking about she said 'the forest.' I don't know what she meant, but Morgan knew."

"You have plenty of sense," said her father, looking fondly upon her.

"Of course I have, I am your child," laughed Belle, jumping up to give him a hug.

CHAPTER TWELFTH.

THE GILPIN PLACE.

"This is the Forest of Arden.'

ROSALIND, walking in the garden next morning, heard her name called from the other side of the hedge.

"Is that you, Maurice?" she asked, bending to peep through the narrow opening where they had first become acquainted.

"Yes; don't you want to go up to the Gilpin place?"

"I'd rather go there than anywhere," Rosalind assented eagerly, "I am so interested in Aunt Patricia and the ring."

"The house is closed, you know, but the grounds are pretty. I'll meet you at the gate whenever you are ready," Maurice answered.

He considered Rosalind his special friend by right of first acquaintance, and had no thought of allowing Katherine or Belle to get the advan-

tage of him, and for this reason he had planned the expedition. He also wished to talk over "As You Like It" without interruption, and was decidedly provoked when she called to Katherine, who was shelling peas on the side porch, "We are going to the Gilpin place; can't you come when you have finished?"

Katherine, who had tried in vain to find out from Maurice where he was going, was more than delighted at the invitation.

"It would have been nicer if we had stayed to help her," Rosalind remarked, as they walked up the street.

"Girls' work," Maurice growled.

"Well, I am a girl. And why shouldn't boys shell peas? They eat them."

Maurice scorned such logic, but her eyes were so merry it was with an effort he kept himself from smiling.

"Katherine is such a bother," he said.

"I like Katherine; she is so pleasant," Rosalind observed, with a side glance at her companion.

"Perhaps you'd rather go with her and have me stay at home?" he suggested, with much dignity.

"And shell peas?" Rosalind laughed.

What a provoking girl this was! And yet he liked her, and somehow at the vision of himself shelling peas he couldn't help laughing, too, and thus harmony was restored.

After climbing the hill, a good deal of exertion for Maurice with his crutch, they paused to rest on the steps leading up from the gate of the Gilpin place.

Rosalind, looking at the dignified mansion among the trees, felt the atmosphere of mysterious interest that always surrounds a closed and deserted house, particularly an old one upon which several generations have left their impress. She thought of the young and lovely Patricia, and the sailor lover who never came back.

"Do you know, I feel very sorry for Aunt Patricia, Maurice. To have some one you love never come back — it must be very hard. I can understand a little now since father and cousin Louis went away. Miss Betty said she bore it bravely, too."

"It was a long time ago," said Maurice, feeling that it was a waste of emotion to grieve over things that had happened so far back in the past.

"But there is the ring. It is not so very long ago since that was here. Don't you wish we could go into the house and look for it? I believe it is there somewhere;" Rosalind spoke with assurance.

"But they searched every nook and cranny," said Maurice.

"If it were in a story, there would be a secret drawer somewhere. I wonder if Aunt Patricia isn't sorry it is lost." Rosalind sat in silence for a few moments, looking down at the town. "I like Friendship," she said. "There are a great many interesting things happening here, more than ever happen at home."

The Gilpin house stood on an elevation of its own, from which the ground sloped gently in all directions. Its late owner had cared little for flowers and shrubs, but had taken pride in his trees, which still preserved the dignity of their forest days. At the back of the house there was a view of the little winding river, and halfway down the slope a once flourishing vegetable garden had turned itself into a picturesque wilderness of weeds. The charm of it all grew upon Rosalind as they walked about.

"I should like to live here, Maurice. I like it better than our garden — grandmamma's, I mean. Let's sit on the grass, where we can see the river."

Not far from them was the rustic summer-house which Miss Betty had called Patricia's arbor.

"Maurice," Rosalind exclaimed, with conviction in her tone, "this is the Forest of Arden."

"You talk about it as if it were all true, instead of only a story," said Maurice.

"But it is true — one kind of true. Cousin Louis explained it to me once — ever so long ago, when I had a sore throat and couldn't go to the Christmas tree, at the president's. I cried and was dreadfully cross, and wouldn't look at my Christmas things; and after a while he asked me if I should like to live in the Forest of Arden. I was so surprised I stopped crying, and he told me that when we were brave and happy, we made a pleasant place for ourselves, where lovely things could happen, and when we were cross and miserable we made a desert for ourselves, where pleasant things couldn't possibly come about, just as if you want flowers to grow, you have to have good soil.

"Cousin Louis can tell things in a very interesting way, and by and by I began to feel ashamed, and I made up my mind to try it; and when I told father, he said he would try too, and we found it was really true, Maurice. He and Cousin Louis and I — oh, we had such good times! We even told the president about it, and Cousin Louis said he was going to start a secret society of the Forest of Arden. Then he was ill, and everything stopped.

"I know it isn't easy to stay in the Forest always, particularly when you are dreadfully lonesome, but the magician says if you keep on trying you will find the good in it after a while."

"How can there be good in bad things?" Maurice demanded.

"Did you read what was in my book? I know it by heart. 'If we choose, we may walk always in the Forest, where the birds sing and the sunlight sifts through the trees, where, although we sometimes grow footsore and hungry, we know that the goal is sure.' That means it will all come right in the end. Don't you know how, in the story, the people who hated each other all came to be friends in the Forest?"

The sun travelling around the beech tree encroached upon their resting-place, and Maurice proposed moving farther down the slope. "Tell me about the secret society," he said, as they again settled themselves.

"It was a very nice plan," Rosalind answered, clasping her knees and looking up into the tree top. "He told me about it one evening when he wasn't well and had to lie on the sofa, while father did the proofs. Only those could belong who made the best of things and knew the secret of the Forest. We were sure the president would join because he had had a great trouble and was very brave; and there was Mrs. Brown, who had lost all her money, and kept house for us. Then, I didn't have anything much to be brave about, but I have since, for I did so want to go with father and Cousin Louis. Perhaps that doesn't seem much," she added apologetically, "'but small things count,' Cousin Louis said."

"I should think it might," Maurice agreed.

"Aunt Patricia could have belonged," said Rosalind, her eyes still in the tree top. "I wonder if she knew about the Forest?"

Maurice felt stirred by the picture her words called up of a great company of people all bearing hard things bravely. "There is Morgan," he suggested. "It must be hard to be deaf, yet he is always cheerful."

"Yes, indeed, he could belong. He knows the secret of the Forest. And Maurice, you have a beautiful chance to be brave."

Maurice's face grew red, he pushed his crutch impatiently from him. "I haven't been brave," he said.

"No, you haven't," Rosalind acknowledged frankly; "but then you did not know about the Forest. Maurice, let's start a society, you and I, and perhaps some of the others will join. The magician will, I know."

A shrill whistle was heard at this moment.

"It is Jack," said Maurice; and sure enough that individual presently appeared and dropped down beside them, breathless from his run up the hill.

"What are you two doing?" he puffed.

"Talking. How warm you are!" and Rosalind offered her broad-brimmed hat for a fan. "Have you seen anything of Katherine?"

"She and Belle are on the way. Say, what were you talking about? It seemed to be interesting." Jack rolled over on his back and blinked at the sky.

Rosalind looked at Maurice. "Would you tell him?"

"No," was the prompt reply, "he wouldn't care for it." He felt certain harum-scarum Jack would only be bored by the Forest, perhaps would make fun.

Jack turned his face to Rosalind, "Tell me," he urged; "Maurice doesn't know what I like."

"I will, then, as soon as the girls come."

It was not long before Belle was heard calling, and she and Katherine came running across the grass and joined the group under the tree.

"We are waiting for you; Jack wants to hear about the Forest," said Rosalind.

"Yes, you promised to tell us what you meant, and how Morgan came to know about it." Belle cast her hat on the grass and shook back her hair.

Maurice looked discontented. Jack and Belle would think it silly, and Katherine wouldn't understand.

"Maurice knows about it, and perhaps some of the rest of you have read the story of the Forest of Arden," began Rosalind.

Belle had, but Katherine and Jack had not so much as heard of it, so Rosalind told the story of the banished Duke and his followers who lived in the Forest, and were happy because they had learned to make the best of things and to find good even in trouble and disappointment; how Rosalind, the daughter of the Duke, was also banished, and with her cousin and the clown went to seek her father in the Forest; how Orlando, turned out of his home by his cruel elder brother, also went to the Forest in company with his old servant Adam; of their adventures there; and how finally the wicked Duke and the heartless brother, who were pursuing the runaways, came under the spell of the same Forest and repented of their evil deeds; and the story ended in forgiveness and love under the greenwood tree.

It was just the day and place for the story. The joyous, lavish beauty of summer was everywhere around them, and as Rosalind told it her eyes took on the look Belle had described to her father. There was silence after she finished.

Jack lay with his head on his arms, looking out on the river; Maurice was drawing beech leaves in his note-book, the discontent all gone from his face; Belle absently plaited the hem of her dress; while Katherine twisted a wreath of honeysuckle around her hat.

"Is that all?" Belle asked, after a little.

"That is the story; then I was telling Maurice about the meaning Cousin Louis found in it."

"Tell us that," said Jack.

Rosalind explained the Forest idea, and the plan for a secret society. This at once appealed to Belle.

"That would be fun," she exclaimed. "We could have 'The Forest' for a watchword, and hold meetings out of doors somewhere."

"Yes; 'under the greenwood tree,'" said Maurice.

"I don't understand," said Katherine. "What are we to do?"

"We promise to bear hard things bravely, and —"

"Let's be like Robin Hood," Belle interrupted, "and help down-trodden people."

"Do you know any?" asked her brother, turning over.

"Jack makes me think of the dormouse in 'Alice,'" laughed Rosalind. "He is always going to sleep and waking up."

"I'll tell you!" cried Belle, "let's search for the ring."

"But we don't know where to look," said Katherine.

"A thing isn't much lost if you know where to look, goosie," answered Maurice.

"You see, it is partly pretend," Rosalind explained. "I think it is a beautiful idea, don't you, boys?" she asked.

"Maurice, are you going to promise to bear hard things bravely?" Jack asked, with a quizzical look. It seemed to tickle him greatly, for he went off into a fit of laughing. "'See, the conquering hero comes,'" he hummed.

Maurice gave him a thump with his crutch. "You aren't much of a hero, either," he said. "Who took the roof off when his tooth was pulled?"

"But that hurt," said Jack, still laughing.

"I am willing to own I have been making an

awful fuss, but someway I hadn't thought about it, and I am willing to try if the rest are."

"But I haven't any trouble," said Katherine.

"Everybody has hard things to bear sometimes," replied Rosalind.

"Doesn't Maurice ever snub you?" asked irrepressible Jack.

"What shall we call our society?" Rosalind inquired, looking around the group for suggestions.

Maurice tore a leaf from his note-book and divided it carefully into five parts, handing a slip to each of his companions.

"Now be still for a while and think, and then write down a name."

All was quiet for a time. "Now," said Maurice, "what is yours, Rosalind?"

"The Secret Society of the Forest," said Rosalind.

"Sons and Daughters of the Forest," announced Belle.

"The Forest Society," said Jack.

Katherine had not been able to think of a name. Maurice's was "The Arden Foresters," suggested, he said, by Belle's "Robin Hood."

"I believe it is the best," said Rosalind, and so they all agreed finally, and the new society was named.

"Now we must have a book and write in it what we promise," said Belle.

"Let's appoint Rosalind and Maurice to draw up a — what do you call it?" suggested Jack.

"I know," said Belle; "a constitution."

"I meant to go into Patricia's Arbor, and I forgot," remarked Rosalind, as they walked home together.

"I thought I saw some one sitting there when Belle and I passed," said Katherine.

CHAPTER THIRTEENTH.

IN PATRICIA'S ARBOR.

"O, how full of briers is this working-day world."

ON this same bright morning when Rosalind for the first time saw the Gilpin place, Celia Fair carried her sewing, a piece of dainty lace work, to the old rustic summer-house. It made some variety in the monotony of things to sit here where she could lift her eyes now and then, and looking far away across the river to the hills, let them rest on a bit of sunny road that for a little space emerged from the shadow to disappear again on its winding way.

On this stretch of road the sunshine seemed always to lie warm and bright, and to Celia it brought a sense of restfulness. Perhaps in some far-off time the sunlight would again lie on her path.

She loved the old place, and the thought that in all probability it would soon pass into the

hands of strangers, troubled her. She had often sat here in Patricia's Arbor, beside old Thomas Gilpin, and listened to his reminiscences. She had been a favorite with the old man, all of the tenderness of whose nature had spent itself upon the wife who lived only a brief time; and in Celia's relationship to her, distant though it was, lay the secret of his regard.

One of her earliest recollections was of taking tea at the Gilpin house in company with Genevieve and Allan Whittredge. Mild, fair-faced Miss Anne and her grim-visaged, cross-grained brother were a strangely assorted pair. Celia's childish soul had been filled with awe on these occasions. She had difficulty in keeping her seat in the stiff old haircloth chairs, or in crossing the polished floor of the drawing-room without slipping.

At one end of this room stood the ancient spinet, long ago the property of her own great-grandmother, which she was told would some day be hers. Celia had been proud of this until Miss Anne, displaying her chief treasures, Patricia's miniature and ring, remarked upon Genevieve's likeness to her great-aunt. Genevieve,

with the ring on her finger, looked complacently over her shoulder at the long mirror, and Celia was smitten with sudden envy. A great-grandmother called Saint Cecilia was not half so interesting as a beautiful great-aunt with a romantic love story; and an old and useless spinet not to be compared to a ring like Patricia's. That the ring was to be Genevieve's she never doubted.

Allan had made fun of his sister and treated heirlooms in general with scorn, calling Celia to look at a print of Jonah in knee breeches and shoe buckles, emerging from the mouth of the whale. Allan always saw the fun in things.

Between those days and the present there was a great gulf fixed. She had resolutely put away from her all these memories, and to-day she was annoyed that they should return in such force. They brought only pain to her tired heart.

Her hands fell in her lap, and she gazed with unseeing eyes at the hills. After all, Patricia, mourning her lover, had not known the bitterest sorrow.

The thought of her work, which must be done, aroused her. "What a weak creature I am,

thinking my lot harder than that of any one else," she exclaimed, and taking up her needle she determinedly fixed her mind on the present. There was the suit Tom needed, and the grocery bill that should be paid the first of the month. She must work hard and not waste time in regrets. The summer that meant leisure and pleasure for many, meant only added cares for her.

A surprising announcement broke in upon these dreary thoughts: "This is the Forest of Arden!"

The voice was a sweet, girlish one, and came from somewhere behind the arbor, but the vines grew so thick she could not get a glimpse of the speaker. Celia went on with her work, feeling at first a little annoyed that her quiet should be disturbed, yet the suggestion of sylvan joy in the words grew upon her. The Forest of Arden — where they fleeted the time carelessly — what a rest for tired spirits it seemed to offer!

"If we will, we may travel always in the Forest, where the birds sing and the sunlight sifts through the trees —" the same voice repeated. A stir of wind set the leaves rustling, and Celia lost the rest.

"That means it will all come right in the end."

"The people who hated each other all came to be friends in the Forest."

Fragments like these floated in to Celia. Then she heard Maurice Roberts's voice saying, "Let's go farther down the slope." She went to the door of the arbor and looked out. As she had suspected, Maurice's companion was the girl she had encountered in the cemetery. Rosalind carried her hat in her hand, and as they crossed an open space the sunshine turned her hair to gold.

Celia went back to her work. "It will all come right in the end," — this was what Morgan had told her yesterday; it was strange that this child should cross her path again, and with the same message.

"Even people who hated each other came to be friends in the Forest." To travel always in the Forest! How restful the idea! How would it seem not to hate anybody? To be really at peace? But it was not possible for her.

Her thoughts would persist in dwelling upon Rosalind Whittredge. Again she recalled with shame the impulse that made her scorn the rose.

She was glad she had picked it up and carried it home. Why should she have any feeling against Patterson Whittredge's daughter? Had not her father taken Patterson's side in the family trouble over his marriage? Ah, but that was long ago, and it was hard to forget that Rosalind, with her sweet, serious eyes, was after all Mrs. Whittredge's granddaughter, Genevieve's niece.

"I wish she wasn't, and that I could see her and speak to her, and ask her what she means by the Forest," she thought. "She is gentle and sweet; she is not like the Whittredges. Why should I dislike her because she belongs to them? Oh, it is dreadful to hate people!" Celia hid her face in her hands, "but I do — I do," she added.

CHAPTER FOURTEENTH.

THE ARDEN FORESTERS.

"Like the old Robin Hood of England."

"ARTICLE I. This Society shall be called 'The Arden Foresters,'" read Maurice. "That will do, won't it?"

"Yes; and then let's put the object. It doesn't come next in this, but we shan't need so many articles," Rosalind answered, running her finger down the page of a blue-bound book.

The committee appointed to draw up a constitution for The Arden Foresters had set about it with great seriousness. Their surroundings may have had something to do with this, for their papers were spread out on the leather-covered table in the directors' room at the bank, immediately under the eye of a former president, whose portrait hung over the mantel-piece, while the large-faced clock on the wall gave forth its majestic "tick, tock."

The blue book which was serving as a model, Rosalind had found on her aunt's table, and asked permission to use.

"Well, then, 'Article II. The object of this Society shall be, To remember the Secret of the Forest; to bear hard things bravely; to search for the ring —' Anything else?"

"Maurice, that is beautiful. Is there anything else?" Rosalind pressed her lips with a forefinger.

"Belle wanted to have 'to help the needy,' or something of the kind."

"The down-trodden," said Rosalind, laughing. "I don't like that, do you?"

"Let's wait; we may think of something after a while. Where shall we meet? That might come next."

"Under the trees at the Gilpin place, and when it rains we can go to Patricia's Arbor. What fun it would be to have a meeting in the rain!" A great pattering on the window-pane emphasized Rosalind's remark.

Maurice wrote busily for a minute, looking up to ask, "What day shall we meet?"

"Let's not say any day, and then we can do as we choose," Rosalind suggested, feeling that

the restrictions of a constitution might be burdensome.

Article III then read: "This Society shall hold its meetings at the Gilpin place."

"Maurice, here are qualifications for membership. Ought we to have that?"

"I don't know; what are they?"

Rosalind bent over the book. "Let me see — 'Intelligence, character, and — ' such a funny word. 'R e c i p r o c i t y'; what is that?"

Maurice looked over her shoulder, "'R e c — ' Oh, I know, 'reciprocity.'"

"What does it mean?" Rosalind asked.

"I think it is something political."

"Then we don't want it."

However, as there was a dictionary in the room, it was thought best to consult it.

"Here it is, 'mutual giving and returning,'" Maurice announced, when he found the place.

"'Giving and returning,'" Rosalind repeated; "Maurice, look for 'mutual.'"

"It means almost the same thing, 'something reciprocal, in common,'" he said presently.

"Then it means to do things for each other.

I like that. Why couldn't we put that in Article II? It means 'helping.'"

"How about qualifications, then?" asked Maurice.

"I don't think I'd have any. We'll only ask the people we want."

So reciprocity was added to Article II. As he wrote, Maurice laughed. "I'll bet they won't any of them know what it means," he said.

"Then Article IV will be the watchword, 'The Forest,'" added Rosalind. "And, Maurice, don't you think it would be nice to choose a leaf for a badge? But perhaps we'd better decide that at the next meeting. Don't you think it is going to be fun?"

Maurice agreed that it was, feeling sure Jack and Belle and Katherine must be impressed with the result of their afternoon's work. He had a new blank-book ready for the constitution, and on the first page he had already written: "The Arden Foresters — a Secret Society," and at Rosalind's suggestion he now added the motto, "Good in everything."

They surveyed it with pride, and Rosalind said, "I am just crazy to show it to somebody. Where is Katherine?"

But Maurice thought it wouldn't be fair to the others to show it to her first.

The rain continued to patter against the window. Rosalind sat with her elbows on the table, and her chin in her hands, watching Maurice as he folded the sheet of legal-cap paper on which the constitution was written, and placed it in the book.

"Maurice," she said suddenly, lifting her eyes to the benevolent face of the bank president, "do you know Miss Celia Fair?"

"Miss Celia? Why, of course I do."

"Everybody seems to know everybody in Friendship. It's funny," Rosalind commented thoughtfully. "Then you can tell me just what sort of a person she is."

"She is tip-top; I like Miss Celia," Maurice replied, with emphasis.

"Do you think she is kind?"

"Yes, indeed. The day I felt so badly about not going fishing, — the day you spoke to me through the hedge, — she came in and sat on

the step and tried to cheer me up. Oh, yes, Miss Celia is kind."

"But do you think she would be kind to some one she didn't know?" Rosalind persisted.

Maurice looked at her in surprise, she seemed so much in earnest in these inquiries. "How can you be kind to people you don't know?" he asked.

"I'll tell you about it if you won't tell. You see I am not quite sure." Then Rosalind told the incident of her meeting with Miss Fair in the cemetery. "She looked pleasant and as if she wanted to be friends at first, but she didn't say anything after I told her my name, and when I looked back, I am sure — almost sure — I saw her throw the rose away."

"Miss Celia wouldn't do a thing like that," Maurice asserted stoutly. "She couldn't have any reason for it; she doesn't know you."

"Do you really think she wouldn't?" Rosalind asked, in a tone of relief. "You know there is a kind of a quarrel between her family and ours, — Belle said so, — and I thought perhaps that had something to do with it; but I am going to try to think I was mistaken about the rose."

"LOOKING UP HE DISCOVERED HIS VISITORS."

While they talked the rain had ceased, and some rays of watery sunshine found their way in at the window.

"Let's go to the magician's and show him the constitution and ask him to join," Rosalind proposed.

Maurice was willing, and without a thought of the clouds they started gayly up the street. They were almost there when Rosalind said, "I believe it is going to rain, and we haven't an umbrella."

"Perhaps we shall have to stay to supper with Morgan," Maurice suggested, laughing.

"I had a very good supper there," said Rosalind. "I don't see why everybody should think it was so very funny in me to go."

"No one else would have done it, that's all."

When they looked in at the door of the magician's shop, he was busy with some scraps of leather. Around him were bottomless chairs, topless tables, and melancholy sofas with sagging springs exposed to view, and in one corner a tall, empty clock-case. With his spectacles on the tip of his nose and a pair of large shears in his hand, Morgan might have sat for the picture of some wonder-working genius. Looking up, he

discovered his visitors, and a smile illumined his rugged face, as he waved them a welcome with the big shears. He was never too busy for company.

"Come in, come in," he said; and jumping up he got out a feather duster and whisked off a chair for Rosalind, remarking that dust didn't hurt boys.

Rosalind laid the book on the table among the scraps of leather, open at the page where Maurice had written the name of the society and the motto. Pointing to it, they explained that they wished him to join.

Adjusting his spectacles, the magician carefully read the constitution.

"The Secret of the Forest? What's that?" he asked.

Rosalind pointed to the motto, whereupon he nodded approvingly, and went on. "Search for the ring —" he looked up questioningly; but when it was explained, he shook his head. "Stolen," he said.

Reciprocity seemed to amuse him greatly. He repeated it several times, glancing from one to the other of his visitors.

"Do you suppose he knows what it means?" Maurice asked Rosalind.

The magician's quick eyes understood the question. "Golden Rule?" he asked.

"Why, I did not think of that!" cried Rosalind.

"Morgan has a lot of sense," Maurice replied, with an air of proprietorship.

When he had read it all, the magician nodded approvingly. "I'll have to join because you have my motto," he said.

"Then we have six members to begin with," Rosalind remarked joyfully.

By this time it had grown dark again and the rain was beginning to fall, and while the magician, having a good deal on hand, continued his work, Maurice and Rosalind sat on the claw-footed sofa, regardless of dust. Curly Q. and Crisscross both sought refuge in the shop, and the latter proved himself capable of sociability by jumping up beside Rosalind.

"Morgan really does make me think of a magician," she said, stroking Crisscross and looking at the cabinet-maker. "I saw a picture once called 'The Magician's Doorway.' It was all of

rich, polished marble, and you could look down a long dim passage where a blue light burned. Just at the entrance a splendid tiger was chained, and above his head hung a silver horn."

"Was the horn to call the magician?" asked Maurice.

"Yes, I suppose so; and you couldn't get it without going very near the tiger. Cousin Louis promised to write a story about it, but he never had time."

A flash of lightning, followed immediately by a clap of thunder, startled them. Maurice went to the door and looked out. "It is going to be a big storm," he said.

As he spoke the rain began to fall in torrents, hiding Miss Betty's house across the street from view. Suddenly a solitary figure with a dripping umbrella was almost swept into the shop.

"Why, Miss Celia!" cried Maurice.

"I began to think I would be drowned," she said, laughing breathlessly.

The magician dropped his shears and took her umbrella.

"You are wet; we must have a fire," he said.

Celia protested. A summer shower wouldn't hurt. It was too warm for a fire. Rosalind meanwhile sat in the shadow, Crisscross beside her, the thought of the rose and of Aunt Genevieve's words making her hope Miss Fair would not see her. Her face was gentle; was it possible she could be unkind and disdainful?

The magician came to the rescue. He didn't believe in quarrels anyway, and if he had considered the matter he probably would have argued that Rosalind could have no concern with those she knew nothing about; and observing her in the corner he said, with a wave of the dripping umbrella, "This is Mr. Pat's little girl, Miss Celia. You remember Mr. Pat?"

Celia, shaking out her wet skirts, turned in surprise. As her eyes met Rosalind's she smiled. "Yes," was all she said.

But after a while she came over and patted Crisscross, and said Rosalind must be a witch to have gained his affection so soon, and asked what she and Maurice were doing there, not as if she wanted an answer so much as just to be friendly.

Rosalind felt a great relief, and her eyes were soft as she responded shyly.

CHAPTER FIFTEENTH.

A NEW MEMBER.

"In the circle of this Forest."

IN Friendship the summer was never fairly ushered in until Commencements were over. When the boys of the Military Institute, a mile beyond the village, had yelled their last yell from the back platform of the train as it swept around the curve, and Mrs. Graham's boarders had departed, accompanied by their trunks and the enthusiastic farewells of the town pupils, then, and not before, Friendship settled down to the enjoyment of picnics, crabbing parties, and moonlight excursions.

Going away for the summer was almost unknown in Friendship; a week or two at the shore or in the mountains was as much as any of its loyal inhabitants dreamed of. To the few who like Genevieve Whittredge found the

place dull at any season, the warm days afforded a welcome excuse for flitting.

After the final decision in the Gilpin will case Friendship drew a long breath and acquiesced in the inevitable. Arguments and discussion lost their interest, and something like the old peace settled down on the town.

The Gilpin house and its contents must now be sold, but summer was not an advantageous season, and the sale had been postponed till early fall in the hope of attracting from a distance lovers of old furniture.

Thus the place was left untenanted. Weeds ran riot in the garden, the grass crept stealthily over the walks, and the clematis and honeysuckle on the low stone wall mingled their sweetness in undisturbed luxuriance. The Arden Foresters were free to come and go as they chose, the only other trespasser being Celia Fair, who when her household tasks were done often brought her sewing to Patricia's Arbor, with the feeling that her days there were numbered.

At the Whittredges' Genevieve was making her preparations to leave soon after the return of her brother Allan, who was looked for any

day. Her mother's restless mind had taken a sudden fitful interest in some genealogical question, and welcoming anything that diverted her thoughts from herself had thrown all her energies into the subject, spending most of her time at her desk or in reading old letters.

Rosalind was left to go her ways; if she appeared at meal-time, no questions were asked. Miss Herbert, indeed, shook her head at such liberty. A girl of Rosalind's age should be learning something useful, instead of running about the village or poring over story books. She could not know that with a certain old play for a text-book the children she thought so harum-scarum were learning brave lessons this summer.

Rosalind was happy. The hours when she was not with one or all of these new friends of hers were few, and these she usually spent in the garden, which she was beginning to love, with a book. She had discovered some old books of her father's, given to him in his boyhood, with his name and the date in them, in itself enough to cast a halo over the most stupid tale.

When the sun shone on the garden seat beside the white birch, there was another favorite

spot in the shade of a tall cedar, where an occasional stir of wind brought the spray from the fountain against her face.

Yes, in spite of the puzzles, Rosalind was beginning to love Friendship. It was weeks since Great-uncle Allan had seemed to frown on her, and even the griffins wore a friendlier look; as for the rose, she had come to doubt the evidence of her own eyes since that afternoon at the magician's when Miss Fair had shown such friendliness.

The summer so dreary in prospect to Maurice bade fair to be endurable after all. Rosalind's gray eyes, now merry, now serious, but always seeking the good in things, her contagious belief in the Forest, had stirred his manliness, making him conscious of his fretfulness, and then ashamed. His mother, who had dreaded the long holiday, wondered at his content. Katherine wondered a little too. The Forest of Arden made a very nice game, and it was pleasant to have Maurice in a good humor, but she did not quite understand the connection.

Soon after the close of school Colonel Parton took his two older boys away on a western trip, leaving Jack with no resource but Maurice and

the girls. The two boys were great chums, and as Maurice's knee made active sports impossible, Jack, too, gave them up for the most part.

As for Belle, her indifference to Rosalind had turned into ardent admiration. She and Charlotte Ellis had a sharp dispute over the newcomer. Charlotte confessed she was disappointed in her, and pronounced her odd, all of which Belle deeply resented, the result being a decided coolness between them.

"I am as glad as I can be Charlotte is going away this summer," she was heard to remark.

"She can't be as glad as I am that we aren't going to be in the same town," was Charlotte's retort when the speech was repeated to her.

The cleverness of Maurice and Rosalind was duly impressed upon the other three when the constitution of The Arden Foresters was read, and after careful consideration it had been copied in the blank-book, and beneath it the members signed their names. The excitement of Commencement week being over, a meeting was called to decide on a badge.

It had been decided that any member might call a meeting, and the method was suggested

by Belle. In each garden a spot was selected, — an althea bush at the Partons', a corner of the hedge at the Roberts's, a cedar near the gate at the Whittredges', — in which the summons, a tiny roll of paper tied with grass, was to be deposited.

On the morning appointed for this meeting of The Arden Foresters, Celia Fair, knowing nothing about it, of course, had just settled herself in the arbor with a cushion at her back and her work-basket beside her, when Rosalind looked in. She carried a book and a bunch of leaves, and she seemed surprised to find the summer-house occupied. Her manner was hesitating as, after saying good morning, she asked if Miss Fair had seen Maurice or Belle.

"No; are you expecting them? Won't you come in and sit down while you wait?" Celia asked, noticing the hesitation.

"I wonder what they have told her about me?" was her thought. It brought a flush to her face, and yet why did she care?

Rosalind accepted the invitation shyly. "I must be early," she said. "I was to meet the others here at ten, but I went to drive first with grandmamma."

"It is still ten minutes of ten," Celia said, looking at her watch. "Are you going to have a picnic?"

"No; only a meeting of our society."

"What sort of a society?" Celia asked.

"A secret society," Rosalind replied, with a demure smile.

"Oh, is it? That sounds interesting, but I suppose I can't know any more. What is your book? That isn't part of the secret, is it?"

Rosalind slipped off the paper cover and laid the little volume in Celia's lap.

The young lady took it up, exclaiming with delight over the binding of soft leather, the hand-made paper, and beautiful type. It fell open at the fly-leaf with the inscription.

"And Professor Sargent gave you this lovely book?" she said.

Rosalind's eyes shone at this tribute. "Cousin Louis gave it to me just before he and father started for Japan, and he wrote that about the hard things because I wanted so much to go with them and I couldn't," she explained.

"Rosalind, what was it you were talking to Maurice about, here behind the arbor one day?

I couldn't help hearing a little. It had something to do with a forest." Celia had dropped the book in her lap and looked at Rosalind with something that was almost eagerness in her face.

Rosalind thought a moment. "Why, did you hear us? I know now what it was," and she turned the leaves and pointed to the paragraph beginning, "If we will, we may travel always in the Forest," then she added shyly, "You ought to belong to the Forest because of your name."

"'So losing by the way the sacred gift of happiness,'" Celia repeated, her eyes on the book. "What do you mean by belonging to the Forest?" she asked, looking up.

Rosalind seldom needed to be urged to talk on this subject, and she had a sympathetic listener as she explained the Forest secret, and told how it had helped her in the loneliness of those first days in Friendship.

Celia was lonely and sad. She had held aloof so long in her proud reserve that now there seemed nowhere to turn for the sympathy she longed for, and Rosalind's little allegory, with its simple message of patience and hope, fell upon ground well prepared.

"Oh, Rosalind," she cried, "show me how to live in the Forest!" and with a manner altogether out of keeping with the Celia known to most persons, she drew the child to her. "I wish you would love me, dear," she said.

Rosalind's shyness faded away. She forgot about the rose, and Aunt Genevieve's words. Here was a new friend, one who cared about the Forest. She responded warmly to Celia's caress, and when a few minutes later the other Arden Foresters rushed upon the scene, the two were talking together as if they had known each other always.

"Miss Celia, are you going to join our society?" asked Belle, the ardent, flying to her side and giving her a hug.

"Don't stick yourself on my needle! I haven't been invited yet. Rosalind tells me it is a secret society, and of course I am dying to know about it."

"Let's tell her," said Katherine.

"Girls always want to tell everything," remarked Jack, causing Belle to frown upon him sternly.

"The magician has joined," added Rosalind.

"Then I don't see why Miss Celia can't. Do you, Maurice?" asked Belle.

"Listen, Belle," said Celia, laughing, and without waiting for Maurice's reply, "there may be some difference of opinion as to whether I should be a desirable member or not; suppose you go over there under the oak and talk it over. Then if you want me I'll consider the question."

This seemed a sensible suggestion, and the Foresters retired to the shade of the scarlet oak to discuss the matter. Jack had meant nothing but a fling at the feminine fondness for telling things, and was astonished that his remark could be supposed to reflect upon Miss Celia; and as no one else found any objection to the new member, they returned presently to inform her that she was by unanimous consent invited to become an honorary member of their society.

"As honorary members aren't expected to do much, I'll consider it. Now please tell me about it. What is its name and object?"

Maurice produced the book and read, "'The name of this Society shall be The Arden Foresters.'"

"That sounds like Robin Hood, don't you think?" Belle put in.

"'The object,'" Maurice continued, "'shall be to remember the Secret of the Forest, to bear hard things bravely, to search for the ring, and reciprocity.'"

"What ring?" Celia asked, smiling at the queer ending to this article.

"Don't you know? Patricia's ring. The one that is lost," Rosalind explained, sorting her leaves.

"I fear it is a hopeless quest."

"Maurice," Rosalind exclaimed, "that is the word we wanted, — the 'quest' of the ring. Let's put it in."

"What does it mean?" asked Katherine.

"A search," Celia answered.

"Then why won't 'search' do?"

"But 'quest' sounds more like the Forest," Rosalind urged.

"More romantic," added Belle, adjusting her comb and tying her ribbon.

"One word is as good as another if it means what you want to say," insisted Jack. "They think they are so smart with their 'reciprocity,' and they got it out of a book."

Rosalind glanced at him reproachfully. "We looked in the dictionary for the meaning," she said.

"I see no objection to getting it out of a book. Most constitutions are patterned after others, and reciprocity is a good word. Is there any more?" Miss Celia spread her work on her knee and turned to Maurice.

"Just the watchword 'The Forest.'"

"I like your society very much and want to join if, as you suggested, I can be an honorary member. I can try to bear hard things bravely, and remember the Forest secret, although I haven't any time to give to the quest of the ring."

"Then let her write her name under the magician's," said Rosalind, clapping her hands. "Now we have seven members."

Maurice had his fountain-pen in his pocket, just as if he had expected a new member this morning, and Celia signed her name in the book beneath "C. J. Morgan, Magician."

"He wrote that for fun, because Rosalind calls him 'the magician,'" Belle explained.

"I haven't heard that old title for many a

year," Celia remarked, as she waited for her signature to dry.

"Now we have to choose a badge," said Belle.

Rosalind spread out her collection of leaves. "We thought a leaf would be appropriate," she added. There were beech, and maple, and poplar, and oak in several varieties.

"I think I should choose this," and Celia pointed to a leaf from the scarlet oak. "Not only because it is beautiful in shape, but because the oak tree stands for courage. A 'heart of oak' has become a proverb, you know."

Rosalind's eyes grew bright. "I didn't think of its having a meaning. I like that."

"And in the fall we'll have scarlet badges instead of green ones," said Jack.

There could be no better choice than this, they all agreed; and Jack gathered a handful, that they might put on their badges at once.

"On our way home we must stop and tell the magician about it," Rosalind said, as she pinned a leaf on Celia's dress.

CHAPTER SIXTEENTH.

RECIPROCITY.

"Take upon command what we have,
That to your wanting may be ministered."

"CELIA FAIR, do you realize what you have done?"

It was Celia who asked herself the question. She was suffering, as reserved people must, from the reaction that follows an unusual outburst of feeling. That had been a happy morning in the arbor; she had let herself go, had listened to her heart and forgotten her pride, and in the company of the merry Arden Foresters, the old joy of youth had asserted itself. The brightness had stayed with her for days; she had dreamed she could make a fairy tale of life, spending her hours in an enchanted forest, and now had come the awakening.

It seemed destined from the beginning to be a day of misfortunes. She woke with a dull, listless

feeling, and the first thing to greet her eyes when she went downstairs was the woolly head of Bob, the grandson of her sole dependence, Aunt Sally, waiting on the doorstep to impart the cheering information that granny had the "misery" in her side mighty bad, and couldn't come to-day.

At another time it might not have mattered so much, for the boys were away from home, and breakfast for two did not offer any insuperable difficulties to Celia, but there were currants and raspberries waiting to be made into jelly and preserves. To complicate matters, Mrs. Fair had one of her severe headaches.

The fruit would not keep another day, and Celia couldn't leave the house to go down the hill in search of help, even if she had known just where to seek it. After making her mother as comfortable as possible, she began on the currants with sombre energy.

"May I come in, Miss Celia? Will you lend me a cup?" It was Jack who stood in the door.

"Help yourself," she replied, "I am too busy to stop."

"We want to get some water from the

spring," he explained. "Aren't you coming over to-day?"

Celia shook her head.

Jack surveyed the piles of fruit. "Jiminy! have you all this to do?"

"Yes; Aunt Sally is sick this morning, and it can't wait."

Jack disappeared, leaving Celia to her gloomy thoughts, but ten minutes had not passed before he was back again, accompanied by the other Arden Foresters.

"We have come to help," they announced.

For a moment Celia was annoyed. She had made up her mind to be a martyr and did not care to be disturbed.

"Indeed, you can't," she said. "I am very much obliged, but you would stain yourselves, and —"

"Give us some aprons," interrupted Belle. "Mother lets us help her."

Maurice added, "It is reciprocity, Miss Celia."

Celia's ill temper wavered and went down before the row of bright faces. "Well, perhaps you may help if you really want to, but it is tiresome work."

They did not seem to find it so, as they sat around the table on the porch, carefully done up in checked aprons, three of them at work on the raspberries, and two helping Celia with the currants.

Each wore a fresh oak leaf, and nothing would do but Rosalind must run back to get one for Miss Celia; and there must have been magic in it, so suddenly did Celia's courage revive.

"I feel better," she said, stopping to turn the leaves of the cook-book. "Let me see, — 'boil several hours till the juice is well out of the fruit,' — Sally always lets it drip over night into the big stone jar. I shall have these currants out of the way by dinner-time. You are really a great help. I wish there was something I could do for you."

"Tell us a story, Miss Celia," Belle suggested promptly.

"I don't know any."

"Something about when you were a little girl," said Katherine.

Celia hesitated. "The only story I know is about a magician and a tiger. Rosalind's calling Morgan 'the magician' reminded me of it."

"I love magicians and tigers," Rosalind remarked. "Do you remember the picture I told you about, Maurice? Do tell it to us, Miss Celia."

Celia wondered afterward how she could have done it, but now she thought of nothing but her desire to please the children, so she began:—

"Once there was a little girl who loved fairy tales and believed with all her heart in fairies, magicians, and ogres. In the town where she had recently come to live she had a playmate, a boy, who laughed at her for thinking there were such creatures in the world, and the two often argued the matter.

"One day this little girl was sitting on the fence looking up at the sky and wishing something would happen, when she heard the boy calling her. She answered, and he came running across the grass and climbed up beside her, and with an air of great mystery told her he knew a secret. Of course the little girl was anxious to hear it, and of course the boy tried to tease her by refusing to tell. But by and by he could keep it no longer, and in tones of awe he whispered that he knew a magician who lived in their very town.

"The little girl clapped her hands; for if her playmate believed in magicians, he must surely come to believe in fairies too.

"The boy went on to explain that this magician appeared exactly like other men, so that few guessed his mysterious power. He lived in a house quite like other houses except that its door was painted black; but behind this door lay a tiger, always ready to spring upon any one who tried to enter. On this great tiger in some way depended the magician's power.

"There had been a fire in the village recently, which, the boy said, had been caused by the magician, as well as certain other calamities, such as scarlet-fever and measles, and the time had come when this must be stopped. The boy claimed to have discovered — he did not say how — that the magician's tiger had three white whiskers, all the rest being black, and in these white whiskers resided all his power. If in any way they could be removed, he and his master would be harmless forevermore.

"But how was this to be done? the little girl wanted to know, feeling deeply impressed meanwhile by the tragedy of the situation.

"The only way, the boy replied, was to catch the tiger while he slept, and then — a snip of the scissors, and he could do no more harm. The little girl had some round-pointed scissors hanging from a ribbon around her neck, for she was fond of cutting things; she took them in her hand now and looked at them with a shiver as the boy added in a tragic whisper, '*We* must do it!'

"Although she was very much afraid, she never thought of objecting. It was her duty, and she had great confidence in her companion. He could do many things she couldn't do, and he was ten and she only six; so when he examined the scissors and said they would answer, without a word of objection she slipped down from the fence and trotted beside him.

"It seemed quite natural that the way should be over fences and through back yards instead of along the street. They climbed rails and squeezed through hedges until the little girl was breathless and had not the least idea where she was, when she found herself in a narrow garden-path, on either side of which grew hollyhocks and sunflowers.

"'There is the door,' the boy whispered; and — yes — at the end of the path she saw the black door.

"'This is the hour when he sleeps,' the boy said, in thrilling tones, looking at an imaginary watch. 'We have timed it well. I will open the door softly, and you have your scissors ready; I will hold him while you cut off the whiskers.' The little girl's heart almost stopped beating, but she had no thought of running away.

"They reached the door; the boy had his hand on the knob. He was opening it very gently — when something happened! He stumbled, or his hand slipped. It flew open and there before them stood the magician, brandishing a glittering sword, and beside him were the gleaming eyes of a tiger.

"With a cry of terror the little girl fell all in a heap, grasping her scissors, shutting her eyes tight till all should be over. Then some one picked her up and asked if she was hurt, and slowly gaining courage she opened her eyes and looked into the kind face of Morgan, the cabinet-maker. At his side was Tiger, the great striped cat, and on the work-bench lay his shining saw. The boy stood by, laughing."

"I thought he must be fooling her," remarked Katherine, in a tone of relief.

"You don't mean it!" said Maurice, with fine sarcasm.

"But finish, Miss Celia," begged Rosalind. "What did the little girl think?"

"I believe for a long time she was greatly puzzled. There seemed to have been magic somewhere. She examined Tiger's whiskers and found them all black, and this made her think it possible that some one else had cut out the white ones, and thus turned him into a harmless cat. She felt a little uneasy at times, for fear the cabinet-maker would turn again into the wicked magician, but it never happened."

"And did she go on believing in fairies?" Rosalind asked.

"Oh, yes, for a while. I am not sure she doesn't yet."

"Cousin Louis says that is one of the advantages of the 'Forest of Arden,' you can believe in all those delightful things."

"Were there fairies there?" asked Belle. "I don't remember any."

"There would have been if occasion had called for them," Celia answered.

"But you don't want to believe things if they aren't true, do you?" Katherine looked puzzled. "I wish there were fairies now, but I know there aren't."

"You can't prove there aren't," asserted Jack, mischievously.

"Why, Jack, you know there aren't any fairies really."

"I said you couldn't prove it."

"How can you say they do not exist unless you have seen one not existing? Isn't that the argument in 'Water Babies'?" laughed Celia, as she carried the currants into the kitchen. "It is the difference between fact and fancy, Katherine," she said, coming back.

"I love to pretend things," said Rosalind.

"So do I," echoed Belle.

"Fancy does more than that, it really makes things beautiful. For instance, it makes the difference between a plain, straight letter such as you see in the newspaper and such a letter as I was embroidering yesterday. Some one's fancy saw the plain S ornamented with curving

lines and sprays of flowers, and so it came to be made so."

"That makes me think of those beautiful books the monks used to make," said Maurice.

"The illuminated manuscripts, you mean? That word expresses what fancy does for us, — it illuminates the plain facts, and fills them with beauty."

"Oh, Miss Celia, that is a lovely idea," cried Rosalind. "I must remember it to tell Cousin Louis."

"I fear he wouldn't find it very new," Celia answered, smiling.

By noon the fruit was all picked over, and as Celia stood at the gate watching her helpers out of sight, old Sally came laboring up the walk.

"Law, honey, look like I couldn't rest from studyin' how you was gwine to git them berries done, an' I 'lowed, misery or no misery, I was comin' to help you," she announced.

CHAPTER SEVENTEENTH.

A NEW COMRADE.

"I know you are a gentleman of good conceit."

ROSALIND and Maurice sat on the garden bench discussing "The Young Marooners," one of the story books found in the garret.

"I shouldn't like to be carried off by a big fish as they were, but I do think some sort of an adventure would be interesting. Don't you?" asked Rosalind.

"We'll have to do something," Maurice agreed. "Don't you wish we could get inside the Gilpin house? Mr. Wells, the teller in our bank, sleeps there. I wish he would drop the key."

"Grandmamma says it will be open for people to go through before the sale, but then it will be too late to look for the ring. Belle is so good at thinking of things, I wish she would find a way for us to get in," Rosalind added.

A bell was heard ringing on the other side

of the hedge, and Maurice rose. "Dinner is ready," he said.

Rosalind walked to the gate with him. "Uncle Allan is coming to-morrow," she remarked, "and I just wonder what he is like."

Turning toward the house again, she became aware of a stranger standing beside the griffins. He was not waiting to get in, for the door was open behind him, and furthermore he had the air of being at home. Something in his height and the breadth of his shoulders suggested her father, and as she drew nearer a certain resemblance to Aunt Genevieve developed.

He watched her approach with a look of puzzled interest. "Surely, this isn't Rosalind," he said.

Rosalind paused on the bottom step. "Why, yes, it is. Are you Uncle Allan?"

"A great tall girl like you my niece? Pat's daughter? Impossible!" There was a twinkle in his eye. Clearly, Uncle Allan was a tease.

"I suppose I shall have to be identified," said Rosalind, merrily.

"I begin to see a look of Pat about you." He came down the steps now and took her hand. "Let's sit here and get acquainted," he said,

leading the way to the bench under the birch tree.

Two pairs of eyes, the brown and the gray, looked into each other steadily and soberly for a few seconds, then a dimple began to make itself visible in Rosalind's cheek, whereat the brown eyes twinkled again. "Well, what do you think of me?" they asked.

"You aren't much like Great-uncle Allan," said Rosalind, laughing.

"Heavens! was that your idea of me? And I expected you to be a child of tender age, although I should have known better. It is nearly fourteen years since Pat went away."

"Uncle Allan, did you know my mother?" It was the first time Rosalind had mentioned her mother since she had been in Friendship. She could not have explained her silence any more than she could this sudden question.

"I did not know her, Rosalind. I wish I might have. I saw her once, and I have never forgotten her face."

"I can remember her just a little, but father and Cousin Louis have told me about her, and I have her picture."

"I think," said Uncle Allan, confidently, "that we are going to be friends. Tell me how you like Friendship."

"I like it now. I was dreadfully lonely at first, till things began to happen. Then there was Cousin Betty's tea party, where I met Belle and Jack and the rest, and now — oh, I like it very much! It is a funny place. Aunt Genevieve says you don't like it any better than she does." Rosalind's tone was questioning.

"I believe it does seem rather a stupid old town," he acknowledged. "What do you find interesting about it?"

"There is the magician and his shop; and the out of doors is so beautiful — almost like the country; and the houses are different from those in the city; and there is the will, and the lost ring." Rosalind suddenly remembered her uncle's connection with the ring.

He did not seem to understand, for he asked, "What ring?" then added, "Oh, you mean the Gilpin will. Who has told you about that?"

"Cousin Betty; and she told us the story of Patricia's ring. Uncle Allan, don't you wish we could find it?"

Allan Whittredge smiled at the eager face. "I can't say I care much about it," he replied; then seeing her disappointment, he added, "It was a handsome old ring. Should you like to have it?"

"I'd like to see it; but of course it wasn't meant for me. Cousin Betty said—" Rosalind paused, for the expression on her uncle's face was more than ever like Aunt Genevieve, and he exclaimed impatiently, "Stuff!"

She felt rather hurt. She had expected him to be as interested in the ring as she was. What did he mean by "stuff"? And why didn't he like Friendship? Rosalind fell to pondering all this, sitting in the corner of the bench, looking down at her hands, crossed in her lap.

After some minutes' silence she felt her chin lifted until her eyes met the gaze of the merriest brown ones, from which all trace of disdain or impatience was gone.

"What are you thinking about so soberly? Are you disappointed in me, after all?"

Rosalind laughed. "I am just sorry you don't like Friendship."

"Perhaps it is because I have been away so long. I used to like it when I was a boy."

"Can't you turn into a boy again?"

"Perhaps I might, if you will show me how."

Rosalind clapped her hands. "I don't think I am a bit disappointed in you, and I am almost sure you will like the Forest."

"What forest?"

"I'll show you the book and tell you about it sometime; and then maybe you will join our society."

"This sounds interesting; I believe I shall like Friendship."

Rosalind surveyed him thoughtfully. "I think I'll begin by taking you to see the magician," she said.

By what witchery did she divine that the shortest path to his boyhood was by way of the magician's?

"The magician? Oh, that is Morgan, I suppose." Allan's eyes rested absently on the drooping hydrangea a few feet away.

Presently a soft hand stole beneath his chin, and Rosalind demanded merrily, as she tried to turn his face to hers, "What are you thinking about? Are you disappointed in me?"

"Not terribly," her uncle replied, and seizing

the hand he drew her to him and gave her the kiss of friendship and good-fellowship.

Rosalind was fastidious about kisses. She reserved them for those she loved, and received them shrinkingly from those she did not care for; but in this short interview she had found a friend, and she returned the caress with an ardor of affection pretty to see.

Martin, announcing lunch, interrupted their talk, and, hand in hand, Rosalind and her new comrade walked to the house. In the exuberance of her content, she patted one of the griffins as she passed. Her uncle observed it.

"Have you ever noticed the resemblance between Uncle Allan Barnwell and the griffins?" he asked.

The idea amused Rosalind greatly, and as she took her seat at the table, the sight of the haughtily poised head and eagle eyes of the portrait made her laugh. Things were indeed taking a turn when that stern face caused amusement.

With Uncle Allan at the foot of the table, luncheon was transformed into a festive occasion. Masculine tones were almost startling

from their novelty; Rosalind found herself forgetting to eat. Grandmamma was wonderfully bright, and Aunt Genevieve showed a languid animation most unusual.

"It was like you, Allan, after putting us off so long, to end by surprising us," his sister said.

"I trust you intend to stay for a while," his mother added, almost wistfully.

Genevieve laughed half scornfully, as if she considered this a forlorn hope.

Allan looked at her a moment before he replied, "I don't know; I shall probably be here some time." He had more than half promised his friend Blanchard to join him in a trip over the Canadian Pacific in August. At present he felt inclined to give it up and remain in Friendship. He would not commit himself.

He thought it over lazily after lunch, resting in the sleepy-hollow chair by the east window in the room that had been his ever since he graduated from the nursery. All about him were devices for comfort and adornment that spoke of his mother's hand. She knew the sort of thing he liked, — his handsome, unhappy mother. It was a shame to leave her so much alone; yet

she never complained, but seemed always self-sufficient and independent.

And then Allan began to reflect on the singular fact that he was seldom quite at ease with his mother, although he admired her, and at one time had been very much under her influence. If he had ceased to care for his home, it was her fault for sending him away for so long. "Poor mother!" he thought. "We have all disappointed her; but she was never quite fair to any of us. She wanted us to go her way, and, being her children, we preferred our own."

The sound of Rosalind's voice floated in at the window. He looked out. She was crossing the lawn, after an interview with Katherine through the hedge.

"When are we to begin?" he called.

"Whenever you like," she answered.

He went down and joined her in the garden, thinking what a difference she made in the place. He had not supposed a girl of twelve could be so charming; but then, she was his brother's daughter, with something of her father about her, and he had felt a little boy's admiration for this older brother.

Rosalind told him it was almost like having father or Cousin Louis to talk to; and as they wandered about the garden Allan found himself feeling flattered at her evident pleasure in his society.

She brought out her treasured book to show him, and explained about the Forest; and Allan listened absently, noting the soft curve of her cheek and the length of the dark lashes, his memory going back to that one occasion when he had seen the gentle and lovely girl who was afterward his brother's wife.

"And now we must go to the magician's," said Rosalind.

Not many of the inhabitants of Friendship were abroad in the middle of a summer afternoon, and they had the street almost to themselves when they set out. The quiet, the bowed shutters, the deserted porches, suggested a universal nap. Allan looked up at the tall maples, whose branches met across the road just as they had done in his childhood. Truly, there was a charm about the old town, with its homelike dwellings and generous gardens, he acknowledged to himself. "I believe we are the only people awake," he remarked.

"The magician will be awake," Rosalind replied; and so he was, rubbing down the clock case to-day, but by no means too much occupied for company, and he welcomed his visitors cordially, saying Allan was one of his boys.

Rosalind was amazed at the ease and rapidity with which her uncle talked with the cabinet-maker.

"Have you come home to stay this time, Mr. Allan?" Morgan asked.

Allan laughed, and said he did not know about that.

"Two—four—eight years—" the magician told them off on his fingers, shaking his head. "Too long. Take root somewhere, Mr. Allan; too much travel spoils you. Your father loved Friendship."

"Yes," said Allan, gravely.

"You make him join the society," Morgan said, turning to Rosalind.

"He means our secret society," she explained. "He belongs, and he has our motto on the wall," and she drew her uncle to the door of the back room and pointed it out.

"Oh, I remember Morgan's motto, 'Good in everything.' Does one have to subscribe to that in order to join this society?"

"THEY CROSSED OVER TO SPEAK TO HER."

"That is one thing."

"If there are many such requirements, I fear I shall prove not eligible."

"Does that mean you can't join?" Rosalind asked, looking disappointed.

"Well, I'll consider it. I'll try to be broad-minded and practise believing impossible things, like Alice."

"'Six impossible things before breakfast,'" quoted Rosalind. "I am so glad you know Alice; but it was the White Queen, wasn't it?"

"I shouldn't wonder if it was," Allan answered, laughing.

They went out to the little garden to see the sweet peas and nasturtiums, and the magician insisted upon gathering some. While they waited Rosalind told her uncle about the time she took tea with him.

When at last they left the shop, Miss Betty was standing in her door, and they crossed over to speak to her.

"Well, Allan, I am glad to see you at last," she said, coming down the walk to meet them.

"You do not appear to have pined away in my absence," he replied, shaking hands.

Miss Betty shrugged her shoulders. "I was never much on pining, but my curiosity has been sadly strained."

"What about?"

"You know very well. That ring."

"Now, if that isn't like Friendship," said Allan, laughing, as he followed her to the porch and made himself comfortable in one of the big rocking chairs. Rosalind sat on the step arranging her flowers and listening.

"I would have you know I have something else to think about besides foolish and unreasonable wills and lost jewels," Allan continued. "I regret I cannot relieve the strain, but so far as I know, the ring has not been heard of and is not likely to be."

"But if it should be found?" said Miss Betty. "Stranger things have happened."

"Yes," said Allan.

"Then the question is, do you know what you are going to do with it?"

"That is a question with which I shall not trouble myself until it is found. I am a lazy person, as you know, Cousin Betty."

"I know nothing of the sort, Allan. Now,

there is one thing you might tell me. Do you know what Cousin Thomas meant, or was it one of his jokes? Yes or no."

"No," answered Allan, promptly.

Miss Betty looked puzzled; then she laughed. "It is like playing tit, tat, toe, to talk to you," she exclaimed. "I might have known you'd get ahead of me."

"I have answered your question as you desired; now let's change the subject," he suggested gravely.

Rosalind gave a gentle little chuckle. Miss Betty looked at her. "What do you think of your uncle, Rosalind?" she asked.

"You certainly have the gift for asking pointed questions," Allan remarked, before Rosalind could speak. "I can tell you what she expected. She had an idea that I resembled Uncle Allan Barnwell."

"Gracious! You must be relieved. I could have told you better than that."

"I didn't really think it; I only wondered," said Rosalind.

Miss Betty laughed in a reminiscent sort of way. "Do you remember him, Allan? But no,

I fancy you were too little. He used to visit at our house when I was a child, and I was never so afraid of any one. I suppose you have heard the story of his wedding?"

"I have a dim recollection of the story. Tell it to Rosalind."

"Well," she began, "Uncle Allan was a minister, you know. A Presbyterian of the sternest stuff, rich in eloquence and power of argument, but poor in this world's goods. However, he judiciously fell in love with Matilda Greene, the only daughter of a wealthy Baltimore merchant. As was natural, Matilda chose for her wedding-gown a gorgeous robe of white satin, and all the preparations for the event were on a lavish scale. When the day came and the guests had assembled, and the bride in her beautiful gown and lace veil appeared before the eyes of the bridegroom, Uncle Allan created a sensation by sternly declaring that such a dress was inappropriate for the bride of a humble minister of the Gospel.

"And the meek Matilda, instead of telling him he could marry her as she was or not at all, took off her satin, put on a simple muslin, and

the ceremony was performed. Uncle Allan always referred to his wife as 'My Matilda'; and if the truth were known, I fancy she couldn't call her soul her own."

"I remember the story," said Allan, laughing. "We come of a stubborn family. What would have happened if Matilda had asserted herself?"

"He had her at a disadvantage, — the guests waiting, — but she missed the chance of a life-time," said Miss Betty.

"Was Matilda fond of him?" asked Rosalind.

"Let us hope so; at any rate she always spoke of him as 'My Allan.'"

CHAPTER EIGHTEENTH.

AN IMPRISONED MAIDEN.

"The house doth keep itself,
There's none within."

IT was plain to Rosalind that for some reason her uncle did not wish to discuss the ring; nor did he seem to care whether or not it was found. It was also plain that he did not agree with his mother and sister on the question of the will.

On one occasion when Genevieve made some scornful reference to the probable motives of those who upheld the later one, Allan exclaimed in a tone of irritation, "It is beyond my comprehension how you can have so much feeling in the matter. I have seen no reason to suppose the old man incapable of making a will. The testimony seemed to point the other way; and as nobody except the hospital had anything to gain by this last will, it strikes me as worse than ab-

surd to impute motives of jealousy to people who were only giving their honest opinion."

"It must be because we are not blest with your truly amiable disposition," Genevieve observed languidly.

A smile flitted across Rosalind's face; her uncle had spoken with a good deal of heat. Allan himself laughed. His fits of irritation usually ended in this way.

"Well, it is all over now, and we may as well make the best of it. You shall have Patricia's miniature if I can get it for you."

"Thank you," said Genevieve, really gratified. "I fear you do not know what you are promising."

Rosalind wondered how her uncle felt in regard to the Fairs, and she once or twice mentioned Celia, watching him furtively meanwhile. There was, however, no shadow of a change in his expression, and he made no comment.

A vast difference was made in the house by Allan's return. He stood in no awe of Miss Herbert, had no qualms about disturbing the drawing-room blinds or leaving the front door open from morning till night, — a Friendship cus-

tom which did not recommend itself to the housekeeper. A high cart and a swift-footed mare made their appearance, and Rosalind was often her uncle's companion on his visits to the farms belonging to the estate.

Allan was continually expecting his interest in Friendship to languish, but it did not, and after a few weeks he gave up all thought of the western trip.

The middle of July saw Genevieve on her way to the North, and a little later Miss Herbert went home on a holiday. After their departure peace settled down upon the house behind the griffins.

The Arden Foresters found the summer days none too long. They still met Celia in the arbor now and then; and it was her stories of the Gilpin house, of the ring and the spinet, together with the constant sight of the closed shutters and doors, that led to an adventure one warm August day.

"Important meeting at the oak tree this afternoon, — a discovery!" was the startling announcement Rosalind found within the grass-tied missive on the cedar when she returned from a drive with her uncle one morning. She could hardly

eat her luncheon for eagerness to know what the discovery might be, and the sound of Maurice's low whistle further upset her.

Mrs. Whittredge was rigid where table manners were concerned. Rosalind might not be excused until every one had finished; and to-day Uncle Allan dallied over his dessert, discussing business and the new mills with his mother, while Rosalind's impatience grew.

She looked up despairingly at the stern countenance of Great-uncle Allan, and then at the placid smile of his Matilda, which seemed a rebuke to her restlessness. "I wonder what you did with your satin dress?" she suddenly remarked aloud.

Grandmamma turned toward her in surprise, and Allan, deep in a description of the manufacture of a new kind of paper, looked at her blankly.

"Do you think it is polite to interrupt?" asked Mrs. Whittredge.

"I beg your pardon, Uncle Allan, I was just thinking. I did not mean to say it out loud," Rosalind explained, in great contrition.

"Evidently you were not interested in my

learned discourse," he said, with a terrible frown, which was not at all alarming.

The diversion, however, caused him to remember his pudding, and in a few minutes Rosalind was free to join Maurice and Katherine at the gate.

Belle, who had called the meeting, was waiting for them at the top of the hill.

"I thought you were never coming," she cried; "we have made such a discovery!" And as they walked toward the house she explained that her mother had sent her that morning with a message to Miss Celia, and not finding her at home, she and Jack, who was with her, went over to the Gilpin place to wait. As they wandered about the grounds, something put it into Jack's head to try one of the cobwebby cellar windows, and lo! it opened. Poking their heads in, they saw it was over a stairway, which could be easily reached by walking a few feet on a ledge of stone. Delighted with the discovery, they scrambled in, and making their way up the steps found the door at the top unbolted.

"Jack opened it and peeped into the hall, and then we were as scared as anything, and

ran, and oh! we had such a time getting out. Now, what do you think of it? We can look for the ring really!" Belle paused, out of breath.

"What fun!" cried Rosalind

"Just what we have been wishing for," added Maurice. "I have been trying to think how we could get in."

Katherine was the only one who was not enthusiastic over the adventure. She hung back a little and wanted to know what Belle had been afraid of.

"Oh, I don't know. It was so dark, and mysterious, and creepy; but it was such fun!"

"We shan't mind if we are all together," said Rosalind, reassuringly. "We'll pretend we are storming a castle to rescue somebody."

If it occurred to any of them that it might not be exactly right to break into a closed house in this fashion, the idea was quickly dismissed.

Jack was watching for them, sprawled at his ease on the grass by the window. He was rather proud of having been the discoverer of it.

In the heart of the country it could hardly

have been quieter than it was in the Gilpin grounds that afternoon. Now and then some vehicle could be heard going up or down the hill, or the whistle of a canal-boat broke in upon the drowsy droning hum that was part of the summer stillness. There was no one to interfere. Even if Celia brought her work to the arbor, it was on the other side of the house, out of sight and hearing.

The first obstacle the expedition encountered was the impossibility of Maurice's getting through to the stairway with his crutch. It was plain that it was out of the question, yet it was terribly hard to give up. There was a spice of daring in the adventure that appealed to him. For a moment he had a most uncomfortable sensation in his throat; and the old pettishness returned as he thundered at Katherine, in response to her reiterated, "You mustn't do it, Maurice," "I wish you'd hush. I know what I can do!"

"We are dreadfully sorry, Maurice, but you can keep watch and give the alarm if any one comes," said Belle.

Rosalind's oak leaf, as she stood before him,

recalled him, and suggested that here was a hard thing to be bravely borne.

"Go on," he said; "I'll wait for you here. I don't mind." His tone was almost cheerful. His ill temper came near getting the better of him however, when Katherine insisted upon staying too. Katherine couldn't understand that people sometimes did not want to be pitied; and she was not very anxious, if the truth were known, to join the exploring party.

There was no way of escape for her. The others were too urgent, and Maurice did not want her.

"There is an imprisoned maiden in the tower, and we are going to rescue her." As she spoke Rosalind pointed to the garret window.

"What fun! Come on," cried Belle.

Jack had already wriggled in.

"It is rather dusty, isn't it?" Rosalind peeped in at the cobwebs doubtfully, but the thought of the imprisoned maiden overcame her dislike to dust. "Her name is Patricia," she paused on the sill to say.

"And we are going to release her and restore her ring, which a wicked magician has

turned into lead," added Belle, with sudden inspiration.

"Why, Belle, I never thought of that. Perhaps it is the reason nobody can find it," laughed Rosalind, taking one step on the ledge and giving a little shriek of dismay.

"You won't fall. Give me your hand," commanded Jack, with masculine confidence.

The damp gloom of the cellar was rather frightful after the bright sunshine outside. No wonder Katherine crowded close to Belle and their voices sank to awed whispers. It was a relief to step out into the hall above, where the fanlight over the door made it seem less grewsome. The dust lay thick on the Chippendale table and chairs, and from its corner the tall clock looked down on them solemn and voiceless. There was no denying that it was scary, as Belle expressed it. What light there was seemed unreal, and the closed rooms when they peeped in were cheerless and ghostly.

They stole about on tiptoe, keeping close together and talking in low tones. The library, where old Mr. Gilpin had been found unconscious and where the ring had last been seen, was the

most ghostly of all. Belle paused on the threshold.

"Let's go upstairs," she suggested. As she spoke she saw on the floor at her feet a ring of some dull metal, such as is used on light curtain-rods, but under the circumstances there was something a little startling in its being there.

Jack seized it. "Here is Patricia's ring!" he cried.

"Oh, Jack, hush!" whispered Belle, as his voice woke a hundred lonely echoes.

"I'll tell you; let's take it to the magician — our magician — and ask him to break the spell," said Rosalind.

"Oh, I wish you wouldn't talk so," entreated Katherine. "It makes me feel as if it were true."

It was plain that nobody wished to be last on the way upstairs, nor was the post of leader very ardently desired, so they settled it by crowding up four abreast. In the rooms above they breathed more freely, and grew bolder as they wandered about, recognizing things Celia had described.

"Do come here," called Belle, from a small

room, hardly more than a closet, which opened from one of the bed chambers, "and see this funny picture."

There was one window in this room, and the outside shutters had round openings near the top through which the light came. The others looked at the print, and then Rosalind returned to a work-table that pleased her fancy, Katherine following her. As Belle lingered, Jack, in a spirit of mischief, suddenly pulled the door to.

"Jack! Jack! please let me out," she cried.

"Why don't you come out, goosie?"

"You have locked the door. Please, Jack!"

"It isn't locked," Jack insisted, but when he tried to open it he found the knob immovable.

"Maybe it is a dead latch," suggested Rosalind. "He is trying, Belle, really."

"Are you sure you can't open it from the inside?" Jack asked anxiously.

"Yes. I can turn the key both ways, but something holds the knob." Belle's voice was tremulous.

"I am dreadfully sorry. What shall we do?" asked Jack, meekly, turning to Rosalind, after their efforts had proved fruitless.

"Couldn't we open a window and call to Maurice? He would go for some one."

Jack acted upon this and opened a shutter of the hall window, but when he looked out no Maurice was to be seen, nor was there any response to his whistle.

"I'll have to go myself," he said, "unless you'd rather go."

"No, Katherine and I will stay with Belle while you go," Rosalind answered, adding, "Jack, I think Morgan is working at the Fairs'. He could get the door open, I am sure."

"All right," said Jack, but as he turned to go Katherine began to cry. "I am afraid to stay here," she sobbed, quite beside herself with terror.

"Oh! what are you going to do?" came in a wail from the other side of the door.

Rosalind and Jack looked at each other. "Take her with you; I don't mind — much," she said.

Jack was disposed to argue with Katherine. "There is nothing to be afraid of. You ought to stay with Rosalind," he urged, but Katherine was beyond reasoning with her fears.

"Never mind, if you hurry it won't be long. Belle and I can talk through the keyhole."

Very reluctantly Jack left her, accompanied by the tearful Katherine.

"Belle, you aren't afraid?" asked Rosalind, softly, as the sound of retreating steps grew faint.

"Not v-ery," whispered Belle. "But you don't know how queer those holes in the shutters look — like big round eyes staring at me. I have tried to open them but I can't."

"Belle, it is funny, isn't it, that there is an imprisoned maiden after all?"

"Oh, Rosalind, I know how it feels now. It is awful!"

"I think I know a little about it too," said Rosalind, sure that it was almost as bad to have that lonely, echoing house behind her as to be locked in. "Did you remember your oak leaf?" she asked.

"Yes, and I am not going to cry. Rosalind, we might have let Maurice in at the door. Wasn't it stupid of us?"

"Why, Belle! of course we might."

Katherine and Jack meanwhile had made their

way out, the latter requiring a good deal of help, for getting in was easier than getting out. Jack was very indignant with her for not staying with Rosalind, and treated her with a cold disdain most trying.

As soon as she was in the open air, Katherine bitterly repented of her cowardice. She followed Jack meekly as he strode across the grass toward the Fairs', utterly ignoring her.

A sound of voices came from the summer-house, and Jack looked in to discover Maurice talking to Miss Celia. He briefly explained the trouble, adding, "If Morgan is at your house, Miss Celia, I'll go for him."

"I think you will find him. But what a thing for you children to do!" Celia exclaimed. "Who stayed with Belle?"

"Rosalind. Katherine was afraid."

Katherine, who lingered outside, shrunk back as he said this. Her tears began afresh. They all thought her a coward. She didn't want Miss Celia or Maurice to see her. She turned and ran away.

CHAPTER NINETEENTH.

OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

"And there begins my sadness."

ALLAN WHITTREDGE, strolling up the hill toward the Gilpin place late in the afternoon, became aware of a dejected figure approaching, which presently resolved itself into Katherine Roberts, who paused every few minutes to press her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Why, Katherine, what is the trouble?" he asked, when he reached her side.

She stood still, not answering, and with her eyes covered. No one was in sight up or down the street. Allan drew her toward a convenient carriage block and, sitting beside her, asked his question again. His manner was winning, and Katherine, in great need of sympathy, sobbed, "They won't like me any more."

"Who won't?"

"Jack or Rosalind, or any of them," came in quivering tones.

"Why, what have you done that is so terrible? I thought quarrels were unknown in the Forest."

Katherine shook her head. "It wasn't a quarrel. I was afraid because it was dark, — and Jack said I was a coward. He told Maurice and Miss Celia so." The confession ended in more tears.

Patiently Allan questioned and listened until he had a fairly clear idea of the situation. Then he spoke with cheerfulness.

"You all ought to be dealt with for getting into such mischief," he said. "And now don't cry any more. Many a soldier has run away from his first battle-field. If I were you, I'd own up I had been a coward and say I was sorry. Do you want to come back with me, and see the end of this adventure?"

Greatly comforted, Katherine dried her eyes and decided to go with Mr. Whittredge. Jack might not be so hard on her when he saw her under such protection.

By this time Jack had found Morgan and brought him to the Gilpin house, where Celia

and Maurice were waiting; and at Celia's suggestion he went in and opened the side door, thus making entrance easy for the others.

"How silly not to have thought of letting Maurice in this way before," he exclaimed.

The old house, a moment before so ghostly, now rang with the sound of voices as Rosalind, leaning over the stair rail, joyfully welcomed the rescuers.

The magician had some tools with him, but he seemed puzzled at first as to what the trouble could be, when Celia said, "I know what the matter is. Belle, isn't there a little catch at the side of the lock that moves up and down? Try."

"Yes," answered Belle, after a moment's investigation.

"Then push it up," said Celia, but before the words were out of her mouth Belle had the door open and was being as warmly welcomed by Rosalind as if they had been separated for years instead of minutes.

Belle was really pale from the trying experience, and had to wink rapidly to keep the tears of relief out of her eyes, while Celia explained the accident.

"You see, when Jack banged the door the catch fell and kept the knob from turning. We have one that has given us a good deal of trouble." Then she put her arm around Belle and reminded her that the way of transgressors is hard.

"But I wasn't doing anything wrong," replied Belle.

"Everything came true, Maurice," Rosalind said merrily. "First Belle found a ring, and then the imprisoned maiden was rescued; but her name wasn't Patricia, after all."

"I don't believe she wants to play the part again," said Celia.

"Indeed, I don't," answered Belle. "Here is the enchanted ring, Rosalind. Ask the magician to break the spell."

"What children you are!" Celia laughed, and her face was full of brightness as she descended the stairs with Belle beside her, the others following. Three steps from the bottom she came face to face with Allan Whittredge and Katherine.

Celia hated herself for her burning cheeks as she bowed gravely. One hand held her work

bag, the other was on Belle's shoulder; and if, as for a fleeting instant she thought, Allan was about to hold out his hand, he changed his mind. His manner was calmly, unconcernedly polite as he spoke her name.

"Uncle Allan, what are you doing here?" called Rosalind.

Under the chorus of greetings and explanations Celia slipped away. Her thoughts were in a tumult as she hurried across the grounds to her own home.

Her mother was on the porch with a caller, and Celia took her seat there and went on with her sewing. The visitor remarked on her improved color, and Mrs. Fair looked at her daughter in some perplexity, Celia had been so pale of late.

All the evening she worked with feverish energy, writing labels for fruit jars and pasting them on, until no shadow of an excuse remained for not going to bed.

When at length she went to her room, it was to sit at the open window gazing blankly out into the darkness. She had been telling herself fiercely how silly and weak she was, but

she had not succeeded in conquering her unhappiness. Now she resisted no longer.

She had not met Allan Whittredge face to face before for six years, although since his father's death he had been frequently in Friendship. She had known it must happen sometime, and had schooled herself to think it would mean nothing to her, but instead it had brought back a host of vain regrets.

She had been happier of late. Association with those light-hearted children had brought back something of her old hopefulness. That a chance meeting with Allan Whittredge could change all this, humiliated her.

"You haven't any pride, Celia Fair. It was your own doing."

"I had to do it; it was forced on me."

"And a fortunate thing it was. Do you suppose he would care now? These years which he has spent out in the world — what have they done for you? They have turned a happy-hearted girl into a bitter, disappointed woman." So she argued with herself.

Resting her head on the sill, she let her thoughts go where they would.

"You are sure you won't forget, Celia? It is going to be a long time," Allan had said. She was still a schoolgirl, and he just through college, and no one but her father knew about it. Dr. Fair had shaken his head, but he loved Allan almost as much as he loved Celia. Allan must do as his mother wished and go abroad. Time would show of what stuff their love was made, he said.

She had been so happy. She had been glad no one knew. Her happiness was all her own.

Then had come Judge Whittredge's illness, the trouble about the Gilpin will, and the cruel slander that had crushed her father. The brief letter with which she returned Allan's letters and ring, was the result of her bitter resentment and grief. In her sorrow over her father's death she told herself her love was dead, and for a time she believed it. Now she knew it was not so.

"At least, I will be honest with myself. I do care. Perhaps I shall always care. Oh, it is cruel to come so near happiness and miss it. But it is something to have come near it.

"O God, help me—" she prayed, "not to

choose the desert way. I do not want to be bitter and hard."

As she lay back in her chair, too weary to think, through her mind floated Rosalind's words, "Things always come right in the Forest."

It was after dinner. The sun had set, leaving the sky full of opal tints. The delicate leaves of the white birch barely moved, so still was the air. The whir of the last locust had died away, and the soft splash of the fountain was the only sound, as Rosalind in her white dress flitted past the griffins and joined her uncle on the garden bench. He welcomed her with a smile, and smoked on in silence. They were too good comrades to need to talk.

After a while Rosalind spoke: "Uncle Allan, do you know Miss Celia Fair?"

"I used to."

Silence again.

"I like her very much. I think she is sweet, and she bears hard things bravely. Belle says, since her father died they haven't any money, so Miss Celia works, and the boys are troublesome, and her mother is ill a great deal."

Another silence.

"Uncle Allan, was it any harm for me to know her? Belle said there was a quarrel, and Aunt Genevieve said, 'We have nothing to do with the Fairs.'"

As he flicked the ash from his cigar, Allan smiled at Rosalind's unconscious imitation of Genevieve's tone.

"I see no reason why you should take up other people's quarrels," he said gravely.

Then Rosalind told him of her first meeting with Celia, and the incident of the rose. "But I think now I must have been mistaken," she added.

"Perhaps," said Allan, and again he smiled to himself in the twilight, so vividly did the story recall the occasional passionate outbursts of the child Celia, usually so gentle, so timidly reserved.

That strange letter of hers had puzzled while it hurt. Far away from the scene of the trouble, he could not understand the bitterness of the strife. That for a village quarrel — some unkind words, perhaps — she could break the bond between them — was this the Celia he thought he knew so well?

The wound had rankled, but after a time he told himself it was for the best. Travel and study had broadened and matured him, and he could smile now as he recognized, what was unsuspected at the time, that his mother had planned these years of absence in the determination to cure him of a boyish fancy which her eyes had been keen enough to detect.

And yet — his thought would dwell upon her as she stood on the step, her arm around Belle, the laughter fading from her face. Not the little schoolgirl, but a woman, gracious and tender.

Rosalind danced away to join Maurice and Katherine, whose humble penitence had restored her to favor; and over the hedge came the sound of their voices singing an old tune. On the still night air, in their clear treble, the words carried distinctly: —

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot?" —

CHAPTER TWENTIETH.

THE SPINET.

"Thou art not for the fashion of these times."

"WHERE are you going to put it, Celia?" asked Mrs. Fair.

"In Saint Cecilia's room, I suppose," her daughter replied. Her father had given this name to the sitting room which was her own special property, and in which she would have nothing that was not associated in some way with her great-grandmother.

"I don't believe you ever enter it now," Mrs. Fair continued discontentedly.

"The spinet won't mind that; it is used to being alone," Celia answered cheerfully, standing before the mirror, fastening an oak leaf on her dress. It reminded her that even if her heart was heavy and her life full of difficulties, she could still be courageous.

"Things are sure to come right in the Forest," she had said to herself again and again. Not because she believed it, but because she longed to, and sometimes she did believe it, — just for a little while, — as she looked from Patricia's Arbor across to that bit of sunny road.

Since the adventure of the Arden Foresters the cellar windows of the Gilpin house had been securely fastened, and its bolts and bars made proof against more experienced house breakers than they. And now preparations for the sale became evident. Circulars containing an inventory of the things to be disposed of were spread abroad, and it was known that the proprietor of the new mills, a stranger in Friendship, had been through the house with the idea of purchasing.

As she unlocked the door of Saint Cecilia's room, Celia could not help remembering the days when she had looked forward so happily to owning the spinet, and seeing it stand beneath her great-grandmother's portrait.

From the cushioned window-seat, where there was a glimpse of the river through the trees, she had loved to survey the calm orderliness of the little room. At heart something of a Puritan,

the straight-backed chairs and unreposeful sofa, the secretary with its diamond-paned doors and glass knobs, the quaint old jardinières brought from China a century ago, pleased her fancy.

How Genevieve Whittredge had smiled and shrugged her shoulders! In those days their half antagonistic friendship had not suffered a complete break. She must have color and warmth and lavishness, and Celia acknowledged her unerring taste and admired the beauty and richness Genevieve found necessary to her happiness, even while she returned contentedly to her own prim little room.

It had been her dreaming place, and when dreams were crowded out by an exacting present, she had closed the door and turned the key. It was so much the less to take care of.

"I don't see why Mr. Gilpin couldn't have left you some money," her mother said, following her. "It would be such a help just now. How are we to keep Tom at the university another year?"

Mrs. Fair had a way of bringing up problems just when her daughter had succeeded in putting them aside.

"I think we can manage in some way, mother. Don't worry," she said.

"But some one has to worry."

"Then let me do it," Celia answered, smiling.

Half an hour later she was standing by the spinet, absently touching the tuneless keys, when a voice from the window startled her. It was Morgan, who with his elbows on the sill, was looking in.

"Better sell it, Miss Celia."

Sell it! The idea had never occurred to her. "What could I get for it?" she asked, going to the window.

"Two hundred — maybe more."

Two hundred dollars would be a great help toward Tom's expenses, but to give up her grandmother's spinet? It took on a new value.

"Let me have it to do over and I guarantee you two hundred dollars," said Morgan.

"I'll think of it and let you know," was Celia's answer.

"It seems like the irony of fate," she told herself, "to have to sell it almost before it is really mine; and yet when two hundred dollars

lie within my reach, I can't refuse to take them. Poor old spinet, it is too bad to send you away. I shouldn't do it if I could help it; but you don't fit in with these times. Or rather, you are helping me out; that is the way to look at it."

So it was that the spinet did not long keep company with the portrait of Saint Cecilia, its original owner, but was harked away to the shop of the magician and the society of the clock case and the claw-footed sofa.

Here Allan Whittredge saw and recognized it one day, and questioned Morgan. Allan remembered the prim little sitting room, and how Celia had looked forward to owning the spinet, and it troubled him to think she was compelled to part with it. When he left the shop he went over to Miss Betty's.

After talking for a while about other things, he asked, "Betty, is it true that Dr. Fair left his family with very little?"

"True? Of course it is. Have you just found that out? Celia is working her fingers to the bone, and I wish I were sure those boys are worth it," was her reply.

"How did it happen?"

"Well, I don't think Dr. Fair had the best judgment in the world when it came to investments; at the same time, a lot of other people lost in the West View coal mines. His death was a great shock; I loved Dr. Fair."

"I too," said Allan. "He was a good man."

"I don't know whether you know it, Allan. Perhaps I ought not to tell you; but there was some talk of Dr. Fair's treatment having done your father harm. I really believe your mother was out of her mind with anxiety, and you know she disliked the doctor. He was dismissed, you remember; and this was whispered about and exaggerated until I think it almost broke his heart. Of course there was no truth in it — that was made clear in the end; and his death put a stop to the talk, for everybody loved and respected Dr. Fair; but it has been terribly hard on Celia."

Allan sat looking at Miss Betty absently. "Terribly hard on Celia," — the words repeated themselves over and over in his mind.

"This is the first I ever heard of it," he said at length.

Miss Betty watched him as he walked away. "As usual I have been minding some one else's business," she said to herself; "but he ought to know it. Allan is a fine fellow."

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIRST.

UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE.

"Must you then be proud and pitiless?"

THE book containing the constitution of the Arden Foresters lay on the garden bench. The Foresters themselves were spending the afternoon at the creek at the foot of Red Hill. All was quiet in the neighborhood. The bank doors had closed two hours ago, and Friendship seemed to have retired for its afternoon nap.

Allan Whittredge unfolded the *County News* and glanced over it, then laid it on his knee and gazed across the lawn with a thoughtful frown. The *County News* presented no problems, but life in this quiet village of Friendship did. His talk with Miss Betty had brought him face to face with them. He was conscious now that his attitude had been one of complacent superiority. He had held himself above the pettiness of vil-

lage life only to discover, as he admitted frankly, that he had been a conceited fool.

His own indignation helped him to realize something of what Celia must have felt at the cruel affront to her father. And his silence all this while made him seem a party to it. It was an intolerable thought, but Allan was not one to brood over difficulties; a gleam of what Miss Betty called the Barnwell stubbornness shone in his eyes as he made an inward vow to find some way to convince Celia of his ignorance of much which had happened at the time of his father's death, and to gain from his mother an admission of her mistake. The question how to accomplish this, filled him with a helpless impatience.

He took up the book that lay beside him and opened it. "The secret of the Forest: Good in everything," he read. "To remember the secret of the Forest, to bear hard things bravely — " He turned the leaves and saw under Morgan's straggling characters the once familiar writing of Celia Fair, — the firm, delicate backhand, so suggestive, to one who knew her, of the determination that lay beneath her gentleness. Did Celia believe there was good in everything?

Surely not in all this trouble. Yet she was bearing hard things bravely, if all he heard were true. It hurt him to think of her carrying a load of responsibility and care. His own life seemed tame from its very lack of care.

He closed the book with decision. His task was to unravel these twisted threads of hatred and misunderstanding, and he would do it.

Meanwhile, he found time for other things. He began to cultivate the society of the Arden Foresters, and to be a boy again in earnest.

Boating on the picturesque little river was one of the pleasures of Friendship. Jack Parton and his brothers owned a boat, the *Mermaid;* and Allan now provided himself with one, which he delighted Rosalind by naming for her. After this the *Mermaid* and the *Rosalind* might frequently be seen following the narrow stream in its winding course, making their way among water lilies and yellow and purple spatter-dock, between banks fringed with willows and wild oats and here and there a clump of cat-tails. What pleasanter way than this of spending the early summer mornings? And then to find some shady anchorage, where lunch could be eaten and the hours

fleeted away merrily until the cool of the afternoon.

With only three in each boat, it was light work for the oarsman; and as rowing was something Maurice could do, and as the girls liked to take their turn, it often happened that Mr. Whittredge had nothing to do but enjoy himself.

Allan smiled sometimes to think how much pleasure he found in the society of these young people. He usually carried a book or magazine, but as often as not it was unopened.

"I suppose the real Arden Foresters did not read books," he remarked one day as, after glancing through the pages of a late novel, he tossed it disrespectfully into the empty lunch basket.

They had eaten their picnic dinner and were resting in easy attitudes on the grass, — Miss Betty not being present to mention spines, — in sight of their boats, swinging gently at anchor.

"Not any?" exclaimed Rosalind, to whom the idea of no books was a dreadful one.

"But they were in a story and were having lots of fun," said Belle.

"And they found their books in brooks, didn't they?" added Maurice.

"When you are having fun, you don't read so much, that is true," Rosalind said, burying her hands in the mass of clover blooms Katherine tossed into her lap. "We'll make a long, long chain, Katherine, and let it trail behind us as we go home."

"Give me your experience," said Allan, stretched at lazy length, with his arms under his head. "Have you found that there is good in things invariably?"

"I like Mr. Allan because he talks to us as if we were grown up," Belle whispered to Rosalind.

"There is more than you would think, till you try," Maurice answered.

"I think so, Uncle Allan," said Rosalind. "I shouldn't have had this good time and learned to know all of you, if father had not gone with Cousin Louis. He said if I stayed in the Forest of Arden, I was sure to meet pleasant people, and I have." Rosalind looked at her companions with a soft light in her gray eyes.

"If it were not for you, we shouldn't be having half so much fun," said Belle, promptly.

"I think you would always have a good time, Belle," answered Rosalind; "but I'm afraid if I

hadn't come to know all of you, I couldn't have stayed in the Forest much longer, though the magician did cheer me up."

"Then the idea is, that it is only when you stay in the Forest that you find the good in things?" said Allan.

"That was the way in the story. Everything came right in the Forest," Rosalind answered.

"I believe," said Allan, "I should like to be an Arden Forester."

This announcement was received with enthusiasm.

"That is, if I understand it. 'To remember the Forest secret, to bear hard things bravely —'"

"And if you are an honorary member, like Miss Celia and Morgan, you won't have to search for the ring," put in Belle.

"The ring is found, and is waiting till the magician breaks the spell. You know, Uncle Allan, he has hung it on a nail in his shop, by the door, just as if he were trying really," Rosalind explained.

"I think I shall ask to be taken on probation," Mr. Whittredge continued.

"What's that?" asked Jack.

"On trial. I might not do you credit, you know."

The Arden Foresters refused to admit the possibility of this, and Belle and Rosalind began delightedly to enumerate their members.

They rowed homeward slowly, for it was up stream, and as they went they unwound the clover chain, and let it trail far behind them until it caught among the reeds and was broken.

When they passed the Gilpin place, on their way from the landing, a stop was made for a fresh supply of oak leaves from their favorite tree, and Rosalind pinned one on her uncle's coat.

"I invite the Arden Foresters to meet with me to-morrow under the greenwood tree," said Mr. Whittredge, surveying his badge.

"That's poetry, go on," said Jack.

"I'll have to fall back into prose to finish. At the foot of Red Hill, at half-past seven P.M."

"What tree does he mean?" asked Katherine.

"Under the greenwood tree is a poetical figure," Mr. Whittredge explained.

"It will be dark at half-past seven," said Jack.

"Of course it will be, and that's going to be the fun," cried Belle.

"There will be a moon," added Maurice, who was wise in such matters.

"And what are we to do there?" asked Rosalind.

"That remains to be seen," was all the satisfaction her uncle would give her.

Anticipation was the order of the next day, and the hours of the afternoon rather dragged. At dinner Rosalind could not keep her eyes from the clock, while her uncle ate in his usual leisurely manner, smiling at her quizzically now and then.

"It will not take more than twenty minutes to walk out," he remarked, at length, when the hands pointed to seven o'clock.

Mrs. Whittredge looked inquiring.

"We are to have a little moonlight party at the creek to-night. We shall not be late, Rosalind and I," Allan added.

"You are making a new departure, are you not? A picnic yesterday, another to-night. You are really falling into the ways of Friendship."

"I am only beginning again where I left off years ago. Rosalind is showing me how." Allan smiled across the table, this time a smile of good-fellowship.

The August nights were cool, and Rosalind carried her cape with its pointed hood, when, the long ten minutes having passed, they set out. Maurice and Katherine were watching for them, and farther down the street the Partons joined them.

Under the trees that grew so thick, it was already dim twilight, but when they reached the more open country road there was still a glow in the sky, and over Red Hill floated the golden moon, attended by a single star. On the little sandy beach beneath the bridge, where the water rippled so pleasantly over the stones, a fire was burning, and before it on a log, with Curly Q. by his side, sat the magician, whittling.

"Is this the party? How lovely! What fun!" they cried, running down to join Morgan and be received by Curly Q. with ecstatic barks.

The magician was evidently expecting them, for he at once began distributing pointed sticks.

"What are they for?" asked Belle.

This was soon explained. Mr. Whittredge produced a tin box from somewhere and proceeded to open it, and Katherine, who was next him, said, "Marshmallows."

"Yes, this is a marshmallow roast," he replied; and fixing one of the white drops on the pointed stick, he held it toward the glowing embers.

The others followed his lead without loss of time, — the magician and all; and Curly Q. sat erect and eager, giving an occasional muffled "woof" to remind them that he liked marshmallows too.

The rose tints faded from the sky; the moon sailed higher; and the glow of the fire grew deeper. The Arden Foresters toasted and talked, and ate their marshmallows, not forgetting Curly Q., and were as merry as the crickets that chirped around them, — as merry, at least, as those insects are said to be.

When it was really impossible to eat another one, they built up the fire for the pleasure of watching it, and sang songs and told stories, the magician, with his elbows on his knees, looking from one to another and laughing as if he understood all the fun.

The glow of their fire and the sound of their voices could be seen and heard far up on Red Hill; so Celia Fair told them, emerging suddenly out of the darkness into the firelight. In her white dress, with something fleecy about her head and shoulders, she suggested a piece of thistledown.

The children gave her a rapturous welcome and proffered marshmallows; the magician looked on smiling. Allan had gone in search of firewood. Celia had been up the hill to visit an old servant who was ill, and returning, with Bob for guard, had seen the fire and heard the voices.

"At first I thought of gypsies, and then Rosalind's pointed hood suggested witches, and it was only when I reached the bridge that I recognized you," she said; adding, "No, I can't stay. Bob is taking me home."

"Do stay; I'll take you home, Miss Celia," said Jack, as Rosalind bestowed marshmallows on the grinning Bob.

Celia hesitated, then turned, as if about to dismiss her escort, when Allan Whittredge stepped into the circle and cast an armful of wood on the fire. Celia retreated into the shadow.

"I must go, dear," she whispered to Belle's urging.

A chorus of protest followed her as she hurried up the bank. She had hardly reached the road when she heard her name spoken quietly, and turning, she faced Allan Whittredge in the moonlight.

There was some hesitation in his manner as he said, "I can understand your wish to avoid me, and yet I am anxious to have a few moments' talk with you, now or at any time that may suit you." As he spoke, a sense of the absurdity of this formality between old playmates swept over him, almost bringing a smile to his lips.

Celia spoke gently. "I think not. I mean I can imagine no reason for it — no good it could do."

"But you can't judge of that until you know what I have to say. Something I did not understand has recently been made clear to me and — it is of that I wish to speak."

"If it has anything to do with the — the difference between your family and mine, it is needless — useless. I cannot listen, I can only try to forget." On the last word Celia's voice broke a little.

Allan took a step forward; "I do not think you have a right to refuse. You should grant me the privilege of defending myself against —"

Celia interposed, "I have not accused you, Mr. Whittredge; there is no occasion for defence. I must say good night."

Nothing could have been more final than her manner as she moved away toward Bob, who waited at a discreet distance. There was no uncertainty in her voice now, nor in the poise of her head.

Allan stood in the road, looking after her retreating figure. He had bungled. If he had begun in the right way, she would have been compelled to listen. What could he do to obtain a hearing? After two years of silence he could not wonder at her refusal to listen to him now.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SECOND.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE.

"I sometimes do believe and sometimes do not."

"BELLE!" called Mrs. Parton from the porch, addressing her daughter, who swung lazily to and fro in the hammock, her eyes on a book, "I can't find Jack, and I want you to take this money to Morgan. Your father reminded me of the bill just before he left, and I haven't thought of it from that day to this."

"Oh, mother, can't—?"

"Can't who? You know there isn't a soul to send but you, and I must have this off my mind. Manda is helping me with the sweet pickles, and Tilly has gone to camp-meeting."

Belle rose reluctantly, tossed back her hair, and went in search of her hat.

"Be sure now to get a receipt," Mrs. Parton said, as she gave the money into Belle's hands. "I am not afraid of Morgan, but the colonel is

certain to accuse me of not paying it if I haven't a receipt to show him."

Belle tucked her book under her arm and walked off.

"Now, Belle," protested her mother, "why can't you leave that book at home? Don't let me hear of your reading as you go along the street."

"I won't, but I like to carry it," answered Belle, patting it lovingly. She was deeply interested in the story, and begrudged the time it took to walk to the magician's. Once there, she decided she would stay awhile to rest and finish the chapter.

The day was warm, and she strolled along in lazy fashion. The Whittredge house as she passed looked deserted. The front shutters were closed, and no one was to be seen. Rosalind had gone away with her uncle for a few days. Belle amused herself by imagining that Rosalind's having been there at all was a dream, and she succeeded in producing a bewildering sense of unreality in her own mind.

Morgan was not in his shop, but that he had been there recently was evident, for his tools lay scattered about.

After the heat of the street the shop was cool and inviting, and a corner of an old sofa offered itself as a desirable spot in which to continue the story. It stood against the wall, and with several other pieces of furniture before it, was a secluded as well as a comfortable resting-place. Belle settled herself to her liking and was at once lost in her book. She finished the chapter and read another, and was beginning a third when something aroused her. For a moment she couldn't remember where she was, then with a finger in her book she peeped around the clock case, which with a high-backed chair screened her corner.

The magician stood in the middle of the room, with his back toward her, gazing intently at something in his hand. Belle was about to come out of her hiding-place when he stepped to the window, and holding the object up between his thumb and finger, let the sunlight fall upon it, laughing gleefully like a child over a toy.

Belle drew back quickly. Was she dreaming still? She pinched herself. No, she was awake, and in the magician's shop, and the thing she had seen in his hand was nothing less than Patricia's

ring! She had heard it described too often not to recognize it. But how came it in Morgan's possession? She sat still and thought.

Meanwhile, after turning it over and over, and nodding and laughing to himself in a way that would have seemed rather crazy to one who did not know him, the magician disappeared into the back room, closing the door behind him. Belle seized the opportunity to steal from the shop. It would be easier to think out of doors.

The little brown and white house across the lane was keeping itself to-day. Miss Betty had gone to the city, and Sophy was at camp-meeting, as Belle happened to know, so she went over and sat on the porch step beside a large hydrangea. She must decide what to do. She remembered very distinctly the circumstances connected with the disappearance of the ring. Morgan had been one of the last persons to speak to old Mr. Gilpin before the attack of heart failure that ended his life, but no one had dreamed of suspecting him. Could he have had it all this time?

Belle felt ashamed of herself for the thought. If there was an honest person in the world, it

was Morgan. She had heard her father talk of circumstantial evidence, and how easy it was to draw wrong conclusions. She was puzzled. One thing was certain, she had seen the ring in his hand.

"Now, if he were really a magician, I might think he had broken the spell on the ring we found in the Gilpin house," she said to herself.

She must go back and pay the bill; for if she did not, her mother would have to know the reason, and Belle was not sure it would be wise to tell her about the discovery. Mrs. Parton acknowledged frankly she couldn't keep a secret, and Belle was wise enough to see it wouldn't do to spread the news abroad.

"I wish Rosalind was here," she thought.

When at length she made up her mind to go back, the magician was at work and greeted her just as usual. Belle wondered if she had not dreamed it after all. While he went into the next room to make change and receipt the bill, she looked for the ring she and Rosalind had hung on a nail beside the door. It was gone. Had any one ever known such a perplexing state of affairs?

The magician must have wondered what made the usually merry Belle so grave, for he asked if she was well as he gave her the bill.

As she walked slowly homeward, she noticed a large, dignified gentleman coming toward her. He did not belong to Friendship, she knew, and she wondered a little who he might be. He looked down on her benevolently through his spectacles as he passed, and for a moment seemed about to speak. Belle quickly forgot him, however, for the ring occupied her thoughts to the exclusion of everything else. Even the story so fascinating an hour ago, had lost its charm.

"Does your head ache?" her mother asked, seeing her sitting on the doorstep, her chin in her hand, her book unopened beside her.

"No, mother; I am just thinking," was Belle's reply.

She was trying to decide whom to tell. "I wish father was at home," she said to herself.

She went to bed with the matter still undecided, and the first thing she thought of when she opened her eyes the next day was the ring. A conversation overheard between her mother and Manda, the cook, added to her uneasiness.

"Miss Mary, did you know there was a 'tective loafin' round town?"

"A detective? No, I did not. If there is, it won't make any difference to you and me," answered Mrs. Parton.

"Maybe it don't make no difference to white folks, but looks like they's always 'spicioning niggers," continued Manda, with a shake of her head. "Tilly 'lows it's that thar ring of old Marse Gilpin's."

"Hardly," said Mrs. Parton, with a laugh. Belle, remembering the stranger, wondered if it might not be true.

Such talk among the servants of Friendship was nothing new. Since the first excitement over the disappearance of the ring, it had broken out periodically; but to Belle this morning it seemed a strange coincidence. Suppose some one else had seen the ring in Morgan's possession? And now it occurred to her to tell Miss Celia.

On her way to the Fairs' she met the stranger again, this time in front of Mrs. Graham's school. He was looking about him with an air of interest, and as Belle approached he asked if this was not the Bishop residence.

"It was," she answered, "but it is a school now."

The gentleman thanked her and walked on.

"I believe he is a detective," she said to herself.

Celia was in her usual place in the arbor bending over a piece of embroidery, when Belle found her.

"Miss Celia, I have the strangest thing to tell you," she began, and then unfolded her story.

Celia listened in astonishment. "Why, Belle, it isn't possible — you don't think — "

"Miss Celia, I don't know. I saw the ring, and I know Morgan isn't a thief, but I don't understand it."

"No, indeed. Morgan, whom we have always known — who is honest as the day!" Celia was silent for a moment, then she said, "Belle, it seems to me the only thing for you to do is to tell Mr. Whittredge. The ring belongs to him; he will know what to do far better than we, and he will think of Morgan, too."

"I would have told him, but he has gone away."

"Gone?"

Belle wondered a little at Miss Celia's tone; it was as if she cared a great deal.

"I don't think he will be gone long. He took Rosalind with him," she added.

"Then I should wait till his return. A few days more can't make much difference. You have been very wise not to mention it to any one."

But when Belle told about the supposed detective, Celia laughed and said she had a vivid imagination, and that it was only a coincidence that the old rumors should be revived just now.

As Belle went down the hill, feeling somewhat crestfallen and rather tired of the whole matter of the ring, she met Maurice and Jack. Jack had spent the night with Maurice, and now they were on their way to the landing to take some pictures with Maurice's new camera. They made no objection to her proposal to join them, so she turned back, feeling strongly tempted to tell her story to them; but she had agreed with Miss Celia that it was best not to talk about it until Mr. Whittredge's return, and Belle prided herself on her ability to keep a secret.

The interest of deciding what view would make the best picture made her forget the ring for a while; but as they sat on the edge of the dock waiting to catch a sailboat about to start out, she suddenly said, "Boys, I believe I saw a detective this morning," and she described the stranger.

"Why do you think he is a detective?" asked Maurice.

"Well, you know they always wear spectacles and try to look like ministers," she answered confidently.

"Pshaw! they have all sorts of disguises," said Jack.

"I don't care, I'm sure he is one, and I think he is looking for the ring." Belle pursed up her lips as much as to say she might tell more.

"You are trying to make us believe you know something," remarked Jack, with brotherly scorn.

"I do. Something I can't tell for — well, for several days."

"Who knows it beside you?" asked Maurice.

"Just Miss Celia."

If Miss Celia knew, it seemed worthy of more respect. "How did you find it out?" asked Jack.

"I can't tell you. It is a mystery; but, boys, I want to keep an eye on that man and see what he does," Belle said impressively.

"How about taking his picture?" suggested Maurice.

"Just the thing!" Belle clapped her hands. "Let's go look for him now."

Anything that promised some fun was hailed with delight. It had been a little dull in Rosalind's absence. When she was with them nobody was conscious of her leadership, but now she was away they were at a loss.

They waylaid old Mr. Biddle, driving in from the country with a load of apples, and demanded a ride which he good-naturedly allowed them, and they drove down the hill in state. When they came within sight of the post-office, Belle clutched Maurice's arm. "There he is," she whispered. "Let's get out and wait for him. You have your camera ready."

The obliging Mr. Biddle stopped his horse and let his passenger out. As for the stranger, if he had known what was wanted of him, he couldn't have been more accommodating. He came slowly down the steps of the post-office and stood within

a few yards of the doorway, where three giggling young persons had taken shelter. Maurice had time for half a dozen pictures if he wanted them.

"He isn't a detective," whispered Jack. "I'll bet a dime he is a minister."

"I said he looked like a minister," Belle retorted.

"I am going to Burke's to get him to show me about developing," said Maurice, as the stranger moved away. "Wouldn't it be fun if we could have his picture to show Rosalind when she comes to-morrow?"

"Is she coming to-morrow? Oh, I am glad!" said Belle.

"Let's follow and see where he goes," Jack proposed, as Maurice left them; and Belle nothing loath, they dogged the steps of the supposed detective. She was both alarmed and triumphant when he was seen to turn into Church Lane, but all other emotions were swallowed up in surprise when, instead of crossing to the magician's shop, he entered Miss Betty Bishop's front gate.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THIRD.

THE DETECTIVE.

"'Twas I, but 'tis not I."

THE next morning Belle and Jack awaited the 10.30 train, seated together on a trunk on the station platform. Celia saw them from the door of the express office across the road. Presently they recognized her and began to wave, and then Belle came flying over to tell her how they had taken the detective's picture and had afterward seen him enter Miss Betty's gate.

"Why should a detective go to Miss Betty's?" Celia asked, much amused.

"Why should he go if he wasn't a detective?" Belle demanded.

"Why not? He may be an agent, or a friend," Celia suggested, laughing.

A whistle in the distance left no time for argument. Belle flew back to the platform,

where Maurice had joined Jack. Celia turned toward home.

She was more perplexed over Belle's story about the ring than she cared to own. Not for a moment did she think Morgan had taken it; and yet he was getting to be an old man and she recalled something she had heard her father say about a certain brain disease that first showed itself in acts wholly out of keeping with the character of its victim. Could this be the explanation?

It was a relief to know that it would soon be in Allan Whittredge's hands. That he would do the kindest, wisest thing, she never thought of doubting.

She had heard with a sinking of heart that he had gone away, and she scorned herself for the sensation of relief when Belle added, it was only for a few days. Celia deeply regretted the way in which she had met his request to speak with her that night at Friendly Creek. Why could she not have listened quietly? In these days she was torn by conflicting feelings. The spirit of the Forest was slowly tempering the bitterness in her heart, but it sometimes

seemed to her that her loyalty to her father was weakening.

It was fortunate matters at home demanded her thoughts. Plans for the winter, getting the boys off to school, and the many small cares of the housekeeper left little time for brooding.

At the station Belle, in her eagerness to be the first to greet Rosalind, had to be dragged back out of harm's way by the baggage master, as the long train swept around the curve.

"You'll find yourself killed one of these days if you don't look out," remarked Jack, descending from the trunk.

But Belle gave small heed. "I am so glad you have come," she cried, seizing upon Rosalind almost before she had her foot on the ground. "Such lots of things have happened."

"Aren't you glad to see me too?" asked Mr. Whittredge.

"Yes, I am especially glad to see you, because I have something to tell you. Something I can't tell any one else."

"Bless me! this is interesting. Just wait till I find my checks, and we'll walk up town together."

Belle, however, was not destined to relate her story just then, for no sooner had they started out, she in front with Mr. Whittredge, and Rosalind and the boys following, than Mr. Molesworth joined them and began talking about the paper mills. There was nothing for her but to fall back with the others, and this was not without its compensation, for now she could have a share in telling Rosalind about the detective.

"It's all nonsense. I don't believe he was a detective at all, but it was fun taking his picture," said Jack.

"I'll have it to show you to-morrow," added Maurice.

"Why don't you ask Cousin Betty who he is?" suggested Rosalind.

Belle's deep sense of the mystery of things had kept her from thinking of this simple method of solving the problem.

"Of course we might," she acknowledged.

"I want to stop at Morgan's a moment," Allan looked back to say.

At the magician's corner Mr. Molesworth left them; but as it was only a step to the shop, the secret still remained untold.

Morgan seemed delighted beyond all reason at sight of them. He greeted Allan as if he had been away years instead of days; and tapping his own breast, he exclaimed, looking from one to another, "I am Morgan, the magician!" Then pointing to the nail where the children had hung the brass ring, he added, "I have broken the spell!" With this he disappeared for a moment into the back room, but he was with them again before they had recovered from their surprise at his strange manner; and now he held something in his hand which he waved aloft gleefully.

Belle began to understand that all her anxiety had been needless.

"What does this mean?" asked Allan, as Morgan put into his hand a little worn case.

The children crowded around him as he opened it and disclosed the long-lost, much talked of sapphire ring. In his delight the cabinet-maker almost danced a jig, and continued to repeat, "I'm a magician."

"It's found; it's found!" cried Rosalind.

"And I knew it," said Belle.

"Hello!" exclaimed Jack. "Was this your secret? Did Morgan tell you?"

Belle tried to explain her discovery, but so great was the excitement nobody would listen. It was really beyond belief that Patricia's ring was actually in their hands. It was some time before they quieted down sufficiently to hear Morgan's story.

He had begun work on the spinet several days ago, he said, and upon removing the top had noticed something wedged in under the strings, which upon investigation he found to be the case containing the ring.

"But where is the other ring?" Rosalind asked.

The magician laughed and said that was another story, and he told how the evening before the real ring was found, Crisscross had been seized with a fit of unusual playfulness, and jumping up on the chest, above which the ring hung, had begun to move it to and fro with his paw, presently knocking it off and sending it rolling across the floor. He darted after it under tables and chairs but apparently never found it; nor could the magician, although he searched carefully.

"So the mystery is not ended yet. We do

not know what became of the magic ring, nor how the real ring came to be in the spinet," Allan remarked.

"It is exactly like a sure enough fairy tale," added Belle; and then she whispered her part of the story, turning her back to the magician, for fear he might see what she was talking about.

"And how about the detective? Did you think he was coming to arrest Morgan?" asked Maurice.

Belle looked a little shamefaced. "I didn't know," she said.

Mr. Whittredge wanted to hear about the detective, and was much amused at her description of the taking of his picture.

Rosalind as she listened held the ring in her hand — Patricia's ring. She had thought a great deal about Patricia, and this seemed to bring her near and make her more real — the young girl who had looked like Aunt Genevieve, only more kind.

"Let's show the ring to Miss Betty! May we, Mr. Whittredge?" asked Belle.

Allan did not appear enthusiastic over the suggestion, but he did not refuse, and followed

the children at a distance as they raced across the street.

"There's the detective now," cried Jack, at the gate.

"Where?" the others asked breathlessly.

"On the porch with Miss Betty."

Sure enough, partially shielded from view by the vines, in one of Miss Betty's comfortable chairs, sat the stranger.

"Why—" began Rosalind, stopping short, "it looks like— Why, Dr. Hollingsworth! I didn't know you were here!"

At the same moment the gentleman started up, exclaiming, "Well, Rosalind, they said you were out of town. I am very glad to see you," and they met and clasped hands like warm friends.

"Children!" cried Rosalind, turning to her companions, "this is our president, Dr. Hollingsworth."

"And these are the young people who took my photograph yesterday," Dr. Hollingsworth observed gravely. There was a twinkle in his eye, however.

By this time Mr. Whittredge had arrived on the scene and was introduced.

"So this is the detective," he said.

The culprits looked at each other and meditated flight, but changed their minds when Dr. Hollingsworth shook hands with them, and said he knew how it was to have a new camera and want to take everything in sight, and that he really felt complimented.

Belle thought she wouldn't have minded, except for the detective part of it, over which Mr. Whittredge made so much fun.

The ring was exhibited, and the whole matter made clear after a while, and Dr. Hollingsworth said he was glad to have figured in any capacity in such an interesting occurrence.

"And how in the world did it get in the spinet?" asked Miss Betty. "I believe Cousin Thomas put it there himself, as a practical joke."

Miss Betty might have been holding a reception that morning, so full of people did her small porch appear, and so continuous was the hum of voices.

Dr. Hollingsworth, it seemed, had been in the habit of visiting in Friendship twenty years ago, and finding himself in the vicinity, he had made it convenient to call upon his old friends; but,

as he said, things had been rather against him. His college friend, the Presbyterian minister, was away on his vacation, Miss Bishop out of town for the day, and Rosalind, he did not know where.

"And so there was nothing for me to do but loaf about that first afternoon," he explained, "but little did I think to what dark suspicions I was laying myself open," and he smiled at Belle.

"Cousin Betty, you never told me you knew our president," Rosalind said reproachfully.

Miss Betty laughed. "You see it had been such a long, long time, Rosalind — "

"That she had forgotten me," added the president.

"Oh, no, I hadn't," she insisted.

They all felt that they should like to see more of him, and that it was too bad he had to leave on the five o'clock train. The last hour was spent with the Whittredges, and Rosalind and Allan accompanied him to the station. Here, while they waited, Rosalind had an opportunity to tell him about the society of Arden Foresters, in which he seemed greatly interested, and was saying he should like to belong, when the gong

sounded the approach of the train, and there was only time for good-by.

"I shall be in this part of the country late in October, and may look in upon you again," the president put his head out of the window to say, as the conductor called, "All aboard."

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOURTH.

AT THE AUCTION.

"Assuredly the thing is to be sold."

ALTHOUGH the September days were warm, it was plain that summer was departing. The flutter of yellow butterflies along the road told it, so did the bursting pods of the milkweed, and the golden-rod and asters, wreathing the meadows in royal colors.

The potting of plants began in the gardens, housewifely minds turned to fall cleaning, the spicy odor of tomato catsup pervaded the atmosphere, and the sound of the school bell was heard in the land.

It was always so, Belle groaned. Just when out of doors grew most alluring, lessons put in their superior claim. To be sure, there were some free afternoons and always Saturdays, but one did not want to lose a moment of the fleeting beauty.

Rosalind missed somewhat the constant companionship of her friends. Mrs. Whittredge thought it hardly worth while to enter her in school for two months, but at the instigation of Miss Herbert some home instruction was begun This Uncle Allan had no conscience about interrupting whenever he wanted Rosalind for a drive or walk. As yet he said nothing about leaving Friendship. A few brief sentences had been exchanged with his mother upon the subject that weighed most heavily on his mind.

"Has anything ever been done, any step taken, to correct the unfounded report which got out at the time of my father's death, in regard to Dr. Fair's treatment of the case?" he asked abruptly one evening.

The color rose in Mrs. Whittredge's face, and she looked up from her work. "I do not understand you. How do you know it was unfounded?"

"For one thing, because I have taken pains to investigate. I saw Dr. Bell in Baltimore."

"May I ask why this sudden zeal?" His mother went on taking careful stitches in a piece of linen.

"For the reason that until a few weeks ago I knew nothing about it. Now I cannot rest till the cruel wrong has been in some measure righted."

"And you conclude without question, at once, that all the wrong is on one side. But I should not be surprised. I have ever been the last to be considered by my children."

"You are not quite fair, mother," Allan answered gently, touched by the unhappy bit of truth in this remark; "but I'll not defend myself more than to say that I am not judging any one. I only wish the wrong on our side made right." And he added, what he realized afterward had the sound of a threat, "Unless it is done, I can never call Friendship my home."

Here it ended for the time.

And now, after a week of rain, October began with perfect weather, and from the strangers who flocked to the auction, attracted by reports of Lowestoft plates and Sheraton furniture, were heard many expressions of delight at the beauty of the old town.

For two hours before the sale began, a stream

of people passed through the house, examining its contents, or wandered about the grounds, admiring the view and the fine beech trees. Friendship itself was well represented in the throng, but rather in the character of interested onlookers than probable purchasers.

Miss Betty was there to watch the fate of her silver, and Allan Whittredge had brought Rosalind, who was eager to see for herself what an auction was like. She hung entranced over Patricia's miniature, which with some other small things of value had been placed in a glass case in the library, until her uncle told her if she would select some article of furniture that particularly pleased her, he would try to get it for her. This delighted her beyond measure, and after much consideration she chose a chest of drawers, with a small mirror above it, swung between two sportive and graceful dolphins. "The little dolphin bureau," she called it.

The sale was to begin at eleven o'clock, and silverware and china were first to be disposed of. The long drawing-room was full of camp chairs, and the audience had begun to assemble when Rosalind entered and sat down in a corner

"SHE CHOSE A CHEST OF DRAWERS."

to wait for her uncle, who was interviewing the auctioneer. Two rows in front of her she saw Miss Betty, with Mrs. Parton and Mrs. Molesworth.

"Do you expect to bid on your cream-jug and sugar-bowl when they are put up, Betty?" asked Mrs. Parton; adding, "How this chair squeaks! I wonder if it will hold me."

"I haven't made up my mind," was the answer. "It goes against the grain to give money for what is really mine already. I can't get over the impression that this is a funeral instead of a sale."

"I wonder if the Whittredges will buy anything. I saw Allan in the hall," said Mrs. Molesworth. She was a tall, angular person, with a severe manner, a marked contrast to Mrs. Parton, with her ample proportions and laughing face. "By the way, Betty," she continued, "what has become of the ring?"

"I know no more than you."

The entrance of several strangers and some confusion about seats, kept Rosalind from hearing any more of the conversation for a time. A portly man completely blocked the way, and she

began to wonder if her uncle would be able to get to the chair she was keeping for him.

When things were quiet again, she heard Mrs. Molesworth say, leaning over Miss Betty and speaking to Mrs. Parton, "Why, she was an actress, wasn't she?"

"I don't see that that was such an insuperable objection," Mrs. Parton replied. "In point of family she was just as good as he, perhaps a little better. The colonel and I met a lady at Cape May who knew them well. This girl was left an orphan early, and through the rascality of her guardian found herself penniless at seventeen. She had inherited the artistic gift of her family, only in her it took the dramatic turn, and necessity and her surroundings all combined to lead her in that direction. Then just as she was making a success she gave it up to marry—" Another interruption, and Rosalind did not hear whom she married.

Her uncle now managed to join her by stepping over the backs of chairs, and it was not long before the sale began.

From the start it was evident the city people had not come to look on. Bidding was spirited,

and Miss Betty's silver soon went "out of sight," as Mrs. Parton expressed it.

Rosalind was highly entertained, and whenever her uncle put in a quiet bid, as he did now and then, she held her breath, fairly, for fear he would not get what he wanted.

To Allan there was an unreality about it all. It seemed so short a time since he and Genevieve and Celia had been children together, taking tea with Cousin Thomas and Cousin Anne. What a strange household the two had constituted in this old mansion, where their whole lives had been spent. As he thought of it, he felt he had an inkling of why Thomas Gilpin had done as he did. Perhaps he had felt it would be better to have a clean sweep, and thus make possible for some one a fresh beginning in the old place. A fine substantial house it was, needing only a few improvements to make of it, with its spacious, high-ceiled rooms and wide hall, a most desirable residence.

Rosalind's voice recalled him. "May I come again this afternoon, Uncle Allan? They may begin on the furniture."

The auction continued for three or four days.

Rosalind became the proud possessor of the dolphin bureau; and her uncle obtained also the miniature of Patricia, for what seemed indeed an extravagant sum, but he had given his promise to his sister.

At the close of the sale on the second day, Allan went into the library to examine some books. The throng of onlookers and buyers had dispersed; only the auctioneer's assistants remained at work in the hall. Purchases had been promptly removed, and the house already seemed dismantled and bare.

Absorbed in his search for a volume not on the catalogue, but which he felt sure was somewhere on the shelves, he became aware of Celia Fair's voice just outside the door. The next moment she entered the library and, going to the fireplace, stooped to examine the andirons. She had not observed him. Should he go quietly out, or make one more appeal to be heard? Allan hesitated.

With her hand on the high mantel-shelf and her head against her hand, Celia stood looking down on the vacant hearth. There was something of weariness in the attitude. What a deli-

cate bit of porcelain she seemed! Allan had a sudden, illogical vision of a fire of blazing logs, and himself and Celia sitting before it.

He moved out of the shadow and she saw him; but though she stood erect and tense in a moment, she did not, as he expected, hasten from the room. Instead, she hesitated, and there was an appeal in her eyes very different from the defiance of a few weeks ago.

"I didn't know there was any one here," she said; adding, "Mr. Whittredge, I have wanted to have an opportunity to say that I regret my rudeness. I was unreasonable — I am sorry."

The childishness of the speech went to Allan's heart. He was conscious of keeping a very tight rein on himself as he answered, "Do not say that. I can understand a little of what you must feel. But does it mean that I may speak now and tell you that only a few weeks ago I first learned the cruel, the unwarranted, charge against your father? I had not understood before."

Celia lifted her hand as if to ward off a blow, but she did not speak.

Allan continued, "My silence must have seemed

like a consent to it. And now, can we not meet, if only for a few minutes, on common ground? Must we be enemies because — "

"Not enemies — oh, no," Celia said, looking toward the door as if she wished to end the interview.

"Then — you will think me very insistent — but there is something I must explain to you. First, won't you let me give you a chair?"

"Thank you, I'll stand," Celia answered; she moved, however, to a table and leaned against it.

"It is about the ring. You perhaps remember the wording of the will? Before I left home to go abroad, so long ago, when I bade good-by to old Mr. Gilpin, he said to me, with that odd chuckle of his, 'Allan, I want Celia to have the ring when I die.' I replied that I hoped he would leave it to you in his will. Again, as I was leaving him, he called after me, 'Remember, Celia is to have the ring.' It escaped my mind until I heard of the will, then of course I remembered. I think he had a feeling that if he left it to anybody it should be to a member of our family, and yet he wished you to have it. Now we both know what the old man had in mind;

but, although things have changed between us since then, the fact remains that the ring is yours." Allan took the little worn case from his breast pocket and held it out.

Celia looked at his extended hand, and shook her head. "I cannot take it," she said.

"But it does not belong to me; you must take it. You put me in an awkward position by refusing."

Celia's eyes flashed. "And how about my position if I should take it?" Has not all Friendship been speculating about the meaning of the Gilpin will? Is not everybody wondering what you are going to do with it? What—" She paused, clearly unable to keep her voice steady.

She seemed about to hurry away when Allan intercepted her. "Forgive me—wait—just a moment. I see now. I was unpardonably stupid. I am not in the habit of considering what people say or may think, but I can see it would not do. I seem to be always annoying you," he concluded helplessly.

A faint smile dawned on Celia's face. "No one can help it; it is just an awkward situation," she said, and left him.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIFTH.

QUESTIONS.

"They asked one another the reason."

ALTHOUGH the auction was over, the air of Friendship still vibrated from the stir. Bereft of its treasures, the Gilpin house stood an empty shell, facing an unknown future; for beyond the statement that he was from Baltimore, nothing was known of its purchaser.

"Why in the world should a man from Baltimore want it?" Mrs. Parton asked; and the question was echoed on all sides. Not to live in, at all events, it appeared, as weeks passed and it remained undisturbed.

Nor was this the only unanswered question. There was the ring. Miss Betty said it might as well have been left in the spinet, for all the good it did any one.

Allan had his own unanswered question; without doubt his mother had hers, as had Celia

Fair, but they gave no sign to the outside world, nor asked any help in finding an answer.

And now came a new excitement. Dr. Pierce, the Presbyterian minister, announced impressively one Sunday that on a week from that day his pulpit would be occupied by his distinguished friend, Dr. Hollingsworth.

It was explained that he had been South on business relating to a bequest to the university, and found it convenient to stop over on his way home. Still, with several large cities within easy reach, his presence was an undoubted compliment to the village, and Friendship began at once to refresh its memory in regard to its expected guest.

Mrs. Molesworth came across the street to ask Mrs. Parton if she had ever heard Dr. Hollingsworth was not orthodox.

Mrs. Parton had not, and seemed to consider it a minor matter, for she went on to tell how pleasant he was, and how fully he appreciated the joke of being taken for a detective by Belle.

"I trust, indeed, it is not true," said Mrs. Molesworth, going back to the original question.

"Well, I shouldn't worry, Cornelia. He is

not likely to do much harm in one sermon," Mrs. Parton answered easily.

Mrs. Molesworth shook her head. "You can never be sure. It is not for myself I fear, but for the boys. I have tried to protect them."

"If your boys are like mine, they won't get any harm from a sermon. I do manage to drag them to church, but it is like taking a horse to water — it is another matter to make them listen."

Mrs. Molesworth returned home feeling that Mary Parton treated serious subjects with undue levity. Mrs. Parton, seeing Miss Betty Bishop approaching, lingered at the gate.

"Well, Betty, I suppose you know we are to have Dr. Hollingsworth at our church Sunday."

She had heard it, but did not seem disposed to enlarge upon it, as was her custom with a piece of news.

"Cornelia Molesworth is worrying because she has heard he is not orthodox."

"She is not obliged to hear him, is she? Nobody can amount to anything nowadays without being accused of heresy; however, I fancy Dr. Hollingsworth can bear up under Mrs. Molesworth's disapproval."

Mrs. Parton surveyed Miss Betty with a twinkle in her eye. "I declare, Betty," she remarked, irrelevantly, "you are growing younger. You look nearer twenty than forty this minute."

"Perhaps it is my new hat," Miss Betty suggested; but surely she had passed the age when one flushes over the possession of a becoming hat.

Mrs. Parton laughed to herself as she went back to the house. "Do you suppose that is why he is coming? Goodness! I wish the colonel was here."

The news was discussed all over town that Monday morning.

"What brings Dr. Hollingsworth here?" Dr. Barnes asked, meeting Colonel Parton in the bank. "He is a friend of the Whittredges, I understand. Anyway, it is a compliment to Friendship."

"Friendship is a great place. He liked our looks when he was here a month or so ago," and the colonel laughed his easy laugh.

"More than likely he thinks we need a little stirring up," Mr. Roberts remarked from his desk.

"Did you hear the joke on my Belle?" the colonel asked, and proceeded to relate the story of the supposed detective and the photograph.

The Arden Foresters in their turn talked it over that afternoon, sitting in a row near the red oak, which lavished badges of crimson and gold upon them now. The October air was delicious. They had raced up the hill and down to the landing and back again, for pure joy of moving in the sparkling atmosphere.

"I have something to tell you," Rosalind announced. "You must all come to church next Sunday, for our president is going to preach."

"Is that what you have to tell? because I knew it already," said Belle, whose cheeks matched the oak leaf she was pinning on her jacket.

"No, it is something even better than that. I have a letter to read to you." As she spoke, Rosalind tossed a handful of leaves at Maurice.

"That's right, wake the professor up," cried Jack, following her example.

"Or bury him," said Belle, joining the onslaught.

Maurice, who had been gazing rather absently into the distance, was aroused to defend himself,

and the battle resolved itself into a hand-to-hand combat between the two boys.

Maurice's crutch had been discarded, and his knee was almost as strong as ever, although rough sports, such as foot-ball, were still denied him. He had recently arrived at the dignity of long trousers, being tall for his age, and Jack had immediately nicknamed him "the professor."

"Now, boys, that is enough," Rosalind said, with decision; "Maurice is waked up, I think."

"Am I awake, or not?" Maurice demanded of the struggling Jack, as he held him down and sat upon him.

"Mercy, yes!" Jack cried, freeing himself with a mighty effort. "But you must smile; I can't have you looking so melancholy. *Smile!*"

In spite of himself Maurice obeyed the command.

"That's right; now sit down and behave," Jack added, laughing.

Rosalind took out her letter. "Listen," she said:—

"My Dear Rosalind: I am coming back to Friendship in a few days, and I want to ask if

the Arden Foresters will admit a new member to their circle? I am greatly interested in what I have heard of it. I have been travelling in the Forest for a good many years, with just an occasional lapse into the desert, but I should like the right to wear an oak leaf and have my name in the Arden Foresters' book, on the page with the magician's.

"Hoping that this is not asking too much, I am

"Yours affectionately,

"CHARLES W. HOLLINGSWORTH."

"Isn't that dear of him?"

"Does he mean it really?" asked Maurice.

"What is the matter with you, Maurice? Of course he does," cried Belle. "He is grand! The detective," and she laughed at the recollection.

"Rosalind is going home before long, and I didn't know whether we would keep it up," Maurice said.

"But I shall come back again next summer, and, — oh, I hope we aren't going to give it up!" Rosalind looked anxiously at her companions.

"Never!" cried Belle.

"No indeed," said Jack. "I am an Arden Forester forever."

"A monkey forever," growled Maurice.

"That is better than a bear, anyway," retorted Jack.

"Maurice reminds me of the day I first talked to him through the hedge," Rosalind remarked, smiling at him.

Maurice laughed. "I was pretty cross that day. I don't mean that I want to give the society up, only we can't meet here much longer, and it seems as if our fun was nearly over."

"It will soon be too cold to have our meetings out of doors; let's ask the magician if we can't meet there," Belle proposed.

"What fun! I almost wish I wasn't going home. You must all write to me about what you do," said Rosalind.

"We shall miss you dreadfully," Belle said, looking pensive for a moment.

"But she hasn't gone yet, so what is the use of thinking about something that is going to happen, when you are having a pretty good time now?" asked Jack, philosophically.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIXTH.

THE PRESIDENT.

"— And good in everything."

FRIENDSHIP was without doubt a church-going community, — the different denominations could all boast of creditable congregations on Sunday mornings, — but on the occasion of Dr. Hollingsworth's visit, the other churches had a mere handful to divide between them, while at the Presbyterian church chairs had to be placed in the aisles. Such an unusual event afforded a pleasing variety in the customary Sabbath monotony. Something of a festive air pervaded the assembly.

Celia Fair and Miss Betty Bishop, both deserters from the Episcopal church, chanced to be seated together. Rosalind's urgent invitation to come and hear our president preach, had brought Celia, and it was, of course, for old friendship's sake that Miss Betty was there.

"Isn't that Mrs. Whittredge?" she whispered

to Celia, as Allan with his mother and Rosalind passed up the aisle. "I don't know when she has been at church before." Then at sight of Mrs. Molesworth Miss Betty gave a slight shrug.

A flutter of interested anticipation was noticeable when Dr. Pierce entered the pulpit accompanied by the stranger, and it must be confessed that the service preceding the sermon was gone through with perfunctorily by the greater part of the congregation. After the notices for the week had been given, there was a general settling back and recalling of wandering attention as Dr. Hollingsworth came forward and stood in the pastor's place at the desk.

Mrs. Molesworth twisted her neck in an endeavor to see if he had notes; Colonel Parton decided promptly that here was no orator; Belle smiled at Rosalind across the aisle, thinking of the detective.

In the president's gaze, as it rested upon the assembly, was the same genial kindliness that had attracted Belle when she first met him on Main Street. It seemed to draw his audience closer to him, to make of it a circle of friends. His manner was simple, his tone almost conver-

sational. At the announcement of his text Celia leaned forward with a sudden conviction that here was a message for her:—

"It is the Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

Varied were the opinions afterward expressed of the sermon that followed. What Celia carried away with her was something like this:—

"I shall speak to you this morning," he said, "upon a subject that touches each one of us very nearly, from the oldest to the youngest; for whatever our circumstances, whether we are rich or poor, learned or simple, whether our lot is cast in protected homes or in the midst of the world's great battle-field, our task is one and the same: to become citizens of the Kingdom of God. This being so, we cannot think too often or too much about this Kingdom, or inquire too minutely into its laws, or ask ourselves too earnestly why it is that so few of us accept the gift in anything like its fulness.

"Although it is offered as a gift, there are conditions to be fulfilled, difficulties to be overcome. Our Lord recognized this when He said that the gate was strait and the way narrow, but He also

said that this Kingdom was worth any price, or was beyond all price, to be obtained at any sacrifice. He emphasized this by a strong figure. It was better to enter into life maimed, He said, — with hand or foot cut off — rather than to miss life altogether. . . . The conditions of entrance into the Kingdom are apparently so simple it is strange we find them so difficult. I think they may be sifted down to two: love and faith, — the love from which service springs, the faith that means joy and peace. If we are to be the children of our Heavenly Father we must love, and we must have in our hearts that joy which grows out of trust.

"Jesus said, 'Seek first the Kingdom of God.' If we do this we need concern ourselves with nothing else, and by concern I mean burden ourselves. The daily round — the vast machinery of life — must go on, but after all only he who belongs to the Kingdom is fitted to meet its problems. He brings to them a calm confidence, a clear vision. His heart does not beat quick with hate or envy. His energy is not weakened by worry. His sight is not dimmed by doubt. . . . Perhaps some of you are saying — what is so

often said — that it is easy to preach; and you ask how one can cease to worry when the path is dark before him; how one can look upon the terrible problems of sin and suffering, and not feel their crushing weight. If what I am saying this morning were simply what I think about it, you are right to doubt. But these are not my words. Can you believe that our Lord when He told His disciples to seek the Kingdom and all other needful things would be added, was simply giving utterance to a beautiful but impracticable theory? For my part, I cannot.

"I would ask you to notice that Jesus founded all he has to say on one great fact: the love of your Heavenly Father for you individually. Are you struggling with poverty, perhaps? Your Heavenly Father knoweth. Try, if but for a day, to put aside your anxiety and fix your thought on this. The things you need shall be given, and you shall find strength for another day of trust.

"Have you been wronged? do you find it hard to forgive? are you bitter? Your Heavenly Father knoweth. He will take care of your cause. Leave it to Him; do not be afraid to

forget it. Seek, ask, knock, that you may obtain entrance into the Kingdom of love.

"Are you crushed by sorrow or physical pain? Your Father knoweth. Cease to fight against it. Come into His Kingdom. Suffering endures but a little while; and if you will have it so, out of it will come a diviner joy.

"Is the world full of dark problems? Your Heavenly Father knoweth. It is His world. Your part is to do, not to despair.

"Are you full of youth and hope and glad anticipation? Your Father knoweth. He made you so, and in a special sense the Kingdom belongs to you. The simple-hearted, the teachable, the joyous, — of such is the Kingdom. Enter in, and immortal youth shall be yours. . . . Oh, if I might help you to know the beauty, the joy, the peace of the Kingdom into which we may enter now and here, if we will. Yet we go on our way, oppressed by care, warped by envy and hate, our eyes blinded by what we call worldly wisdom."

Something like this was what came to Celia; and as she listened, forgetful of her surroundings, it linked itself in her thought to the Forest secret.

It was not so much the words as the aspirations they stirred, — the new belief in the possibility of high and joyous living, the new courage that thrilled in her veins. She was still under the spell when after the benediction Miss Betty asked, with a certain timidity, if she had liked the sermon.

Celia looked at her blankly for a second before she replied, "Oh, so much! It was beautiful. I should like to know him." She turned away with a smile; she was not ready to discuss it yet. She wanted to think.

"He held my attention, I grant, but I don't call it a sermon; it was too elementary, — it was nothing but a talk," she heard Mrs. Molesworth saying.

"If it wasn't a sermon, it was something better," answered cheery Mrs. Parton.

"Most magnetic speaker," the colonel was remarking to some one.

And now Rosalind and Belle claimed Celia's attention, demanding to know what she thought of the detective; and she must come back to earth and listen and reply and enter into their gayety — an easier matter, to be sure, than responding to the comments of grown people.

The next morning, on her way to class, Celia met Miss Betty and Dr. Hollingsworth walking up the hill toward the Gilpin house, and Miss Betty stopped and presented her companion.

After some moments' chat about other things, as they were separating, Celia said, "I want to thank you, Dr. Hollingsworth, for my share of your sermon yesterday." Her face made it evident that this was no merely conventional speech, and the president looked down upon her benignly through his glasses.

"I thank you for being willing to take any of my thoughts to yourself," he said.

Celia now noticed for the first time that he wore an oak leaf, and she remembered with what delight Rosalind and Belle had told her of his wish to be an Arden Forester. "I believe," she added, laughing a little, "that I have the Kingdom of Heaven and the Forest somewhat mixed."

"You will find when you have lived as long as I have that there are often many names for the same thing," the president answered, smiling.

"And do you believe that things always come right in the Forest?" The wistful note in Celia's voice told something of her struggle.

"It has been my experience so far on the journey. But, my dear young lady, the one way to test it is to live there."

"I mean to," she said earnestly.

Whatever the opinion in Friendship of Dr. Hollingsworth's ability as a preacher, he left behind him a most agreeable impression as a mere man, to quote Mrs. Parton.

The Arden Foresters would not soon forget a tramp with him over Red Hill. They found him interested in everything, in a light-hearted, boyish way that made them overlook the fact that he was the president of a great university. When they stopped on the hilltop to rest and enjoy the view, he sat on the fence with them and talked foot-ball and cricket, and told stories of college pranks without deducing a single useful lesson therefrom. This was a surprise to Jack, for Dr. Pierce, who lived next door to the Partons, was fond of morals, and went about with his pockets full, so to speak.

Before they knew it, they found themselves confiding to him their plans for the future.

"You must all come to our university," Rosalind said, with decision, "mustn't they, Dr. Hollings-

worth? Jack can study forestry, and Maurice can study law; and Belle and Katherine —"

"I mean to study medicine if father will let me," Belle put in.

Dr. Hollingsworth smiled upon the bright-eyed little girl, in whose every movement self-reliance and energy were written. "Don't be in haste to decide," he said. "There is sure to be something for you to do, and Rosalind and I shall be glad if, whatever it is, it brings you to our university."

As they watched the president sign his name in the Arden Foresters' book that afternoon, there was stirred in each young heart an impulse to be and to do something worth while in the world.

Meantime, the report spread that in returning to Friendship, Dr. Hollingsworth had had another object than merely to preach for Dr. Pierce.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVENTH.

OLD ENEMIES.

"Kindness nobler ever than revenge."

IF things came right in the Forest, it was not through effort. One had simply to surrender to its spell, to breathe in the beauty and the calm, to live there, as the president had said.

Celia's thoughts were interrupted by Sally's hurried entrance.

"Laws a mercy! Miss Celia, honey, Mrs. Whittredge's in the parlor. I come mighty nigh askin' her what she wanted in dis yere house."

Celia looked up in astonishment. Mrs. Whittredge! What could it mean? "And she asked for me?" she repeated.

"I done tol' her your mamma was sick, but she 'lowed 'twas you she wanted."

Celia recovered herself. "Very well, Sally," she said, but it was with a beating heart she walked the length of the hall. Her enemy! What did it mean?

Mrs. Whittredge, her heavy veil thrown back a little, stood beside the table in the centre of the room.

"You are surprised, Celia," she said, as they faced each other, "but there is something I wish to say to you. No, I will stand, thank you."

Celia waited, feeling, even in the midst of a tumult of emotion, the tragic beauty of the dark eyes.

Mrs. Whittredge seemed to find words difficult. She looked down at the table on which her right hand rested. "I have made many mistakes," she began, "but — I have never meant to wrong any one. At the time of my husband's illness I — there were things said — I did not agree with Dr. Fair, and I may have gone too far. It is my misfortune to be intense. I was very unhappy. I thought the case was not understood. It was my mistake." She paused.

"And my father died, crushed by the knowledge that he was unjustly blamed for the death of his friend! The discovery of your mistake comes too late." Celia's voice was tense with the stored up pain of those two years.

Mrs. Whittredge drew back. "You are hard,"

she said. "We look at things from different standpoints. I have told you I wish to wrong no one, but — ah, your father was cruel — cruel to me!"

"My father was never cruel," Celia cried.

"Listen! He told me I was killing my husband. I, who worshipped him. I, who — God knows — would have given my life to —" she broke off in a passion of grief, sinking into a chair and burying her face in her hands.

Celia stood abashed and trembling before this revelation of a sorrow deeper than her own, — the sorrow of self-accusation and unavailing regret.

"Have you been wronged, are you hard and bitter? Seek the Kingdom of love. Your Heavenly Father knoweth. He will take care of your cause." For a moment Celia struggled against the wave of pity that was sweeping over her, then forgetting everything but the suffering of this woman bowed before her, she knelt by her side.

"Forgive me," she whispered. "I do not want to be hard. I, too, have suffered, though not like you. Perhaps we wronged the dead by

keeping bitterness in our hearts. Perhaps to them it is all made right now. I will forgive; I will try to forget."

Mrs. Whittredge lifted her head. Her face was drawn and white.

"I cannot forget," she said; "it is my misery. But I have no wish to make other lives as unhappy as my own. Will you believe me when I say I regret the wrong I did, and that I want to interfere with no one's happiness hereafter?"

"I will believe it," Celia said, holding out her hand.

Mrs. Whittredge did not refuse it; but her own was very cold in Celia's clasp. Drawing her veil over her face, without another word she left the house.

Celia sat still, dazed by the sudden onward sweep of things. A meaning, a possible motive, beneath Mrs. Whittredge's words occurred to her as her heart began to beat more quietly. "To interfere with no one's happiness hereafter." Could Allan — but no, she would not let herself think it. She would stay in the Forest, and work and wait, and trust in its beneficent spell.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHTH.

BETTER THAN DREAMS.

"I like this place,
And willingly could waste my time in it."

THE engagement of Miss Betty Bishop and Dr. Hollingsworth was announced. As Miss Betty said, there was no use in trying to keep it a secret with Mrs. Parton spreading her suspicions abroad.

"If you had confided in me and asked me not to tell, I shouldn't have breathed it," that lady protested.

"Oh, yes, you would," Miss Betty said, laughing. "You know you tell everything; but, after all, there's no harm done, and no reason why it should not be known. I don't blame people for being surprised, either. I am surprised myself, and I see the absurdity, but —"

"There is no absurdity about it. I am delighted. Dr. Hollingsworth is charming. I'd be

willing to marry him myself if it wasn't for the colonel, and you are going to be as happy as happy can be." Mrs. Parton laughed her pleasant laugh, clearly overjoyed at what seemed to her the good fortune of her friend.

Rosalind first heard the news from Belle. "Why," she said, "if he marries Cousin Betty, the president will be related to me."

"Let's frame Dr. Hollingsworth's picture and give it to her," Maurice suggested.

This was hailed as a brilliant idea, and that afternoon the five might have been seen in the picture store in search of a frame for the stolen photograph. It was an excellent likeness of the president, and an equally good one of black Bob, who, happening to pass at the critical moment, had been included unintentionally.

The proprietor of the store, getting an inkling of the joke, hunted up a small frame which, with the help of a mat, answered very well. Then the Arden Foresters proceeded to Miss Betty's, where they delivered the package into Sophy's hands and scampered away, their courage not being equal to an encounter with her mistress.

At the bank gate they separated, Belle going in with Katherine to practise a duet they were learning, and Jack hurrying home with the fear of his Latin lesson before his eyes. Maurice walked on with Rosalind.

"Come in for a while," she said.

The air was crisp, but the sunshine was bright, and the bench under the bare branches of the white birch seemed more inviting than indoors. As they took their seat there, Rosalind said gayly, "Father will be here this week. We are not sure what day."

"And then you will have to go," Maurice added discontentedly.

"Yes, and I am partly sorry and partly glad. I am so glad I came to Friendship, Maurice. Just think how many friends I have made!"

"How long ago it seems — that day when you spoke to me through the hedge. You must have thought I was a dreadful muff," said Maurice.

Rosalind laughed. "I thought you were cross."

"I was in a horrid temper, but I didn't know how horrid until you told me the story and I

read in the book what your cousin wrote about bearing hard things bravely. I suppose if it had not been for you, I should have gone on being a beast."

"I was feeling pretty cross myself that day. I didn't know then what a pleasant place Friendship is. I think I have found a great deal of joy by the way, as Cousin Louis said," Rosalind continued meditatively.

"And I thought my summer was spoiled," Maurice added.

"It just shows you can never tell," Rosalind concluded wisely.

"Are you sure you won't forget us when you go away?" Maurice wanted to say "me," instead of "us," but a sudden shyness prevented.

"Why, Maurice, I couldn't! Especially you; for you were my first friend." The gray eyes looked into his frankly and happily.

After Maurice had gone, Rosalind still sat there in the wintry sunshine. Things seemed very quiet just now, with Uncle Allan away for a week and Aunt Genevieve not yet returned. She and her grandmother were keeping each other company, and becoming better acquainted

than ever before. Mrs. Whittredge's glance often rested upon her granddaughter with a sort of wistful affection, and once, when their eyes met, Rosalind, with a quick impulse, had gone to her side and put her arms around her. Mrs. Whittredge returned the caress, saying, "I shall be sorry to give you up, dearie."

On another occasion Rosalind had told how surprised she had been to find that her grandmother did not wear caps and do knitting work. "But I like you a great deal better as you are," she added.

Mrs. Whittredge smiled. "I fear I am in every way far from being an ideal grandmother," she said.

Rosalind thought of all this, her eyes on the dismantled garden. The flower beds were bare, the shrubs done up in straw, the fountain dry, and yet something recalled the summer day when she had sat just here learning her hymn. She remembered her old dreams of Friendship, and now she decided that the reality was best. She shut her eyes and tried to think just how she had felt that Sunday afternoon.

"What is the matter, little girl?" The magi-

cian's words, but not his voice; nor was it his face she looked into.

"Father!" she cried, — "you dear! Where did you come from?"

It was some time before any connected conversation was possible.

"Why, father, how brown you are!"

"And Rosalind, how tall you are, and how rosy! To think I have lost six months of your life!"

"And I want to tell you everything just in one minute. What shall I do?" Rosalind said, laughing, as she held him fast.

It did indeed seem a task of alarming proportions to tell all there was to tell; Rosalind felt a little impatient at having to share her father with her grandmother that evening. And there was almost as much to hear, — of Cousin Louis, whose health was now restored, but who was to spend some months in England, of their adventures, and the sights they had seen.

"We shall want something to talk about when we get home," she was reminded.

It would have been plain to the least observant that Patterson Whittredge's life was bound up

with that of this little daughter. As he talked to his mother, his eyes rested fondly on Rosalind, and every subject led back to her at last.

Rosalind, looking from her father to her grandmother, noted how much alike were their dark eyes, but here the resemblance ended. Mrs. Whittredge's oldest son, although he might possess something of her strong will, had nothing of her haughty reserve. His manner, in spite of the preoccupation of the student, was one of winning cordiality. Older and graver than Allan, there was yet a strong likeness between the brothers.

Rosalind could not rest until she had taken her father to all the historic spots, as she merrily called them, — Red Hill, the Gilpin place, the cemetery, and the magician's shop, of course.

"Friendship has been good for you, little girl," he said, as they set out for a walk next day.

"I used to think that stories were better than real things, father, but it isn't so in Friendship. At first I was — oh, so lonely; I thought I never

could be the least bit happy without you and Cousin Louis; but the magician and the Forest helped me, and since then I have had a beautiful time. I love Friendship. I almost wish we could live here."

"And desert Cousin Louis and the university?"

"No, I suppose not; but we can come back in the summer, can't we? And, oh, father dear, you'll join the Arden Foresters, won't you?"

As they walked up the winding road at the cemetery, Mr. Whittredge heard something of those puzzles which had so disturbed Rosalind's first weeks in Friendship, beginning with the story of the rose.

"It's funny, father, but I hadn't thought till then that grown people had quarrels. I might have known it from the story of the Forest; I remembered that afterward, and how things all came right."

"Poor little girl! You should have been warned; and yet in spite of it you have learned that realities are better than dreams."

"Father," Rosalind asked abruptly, "why was it you did not come to Friendship for so

many years? Did not grandmamma like my mother? I think I ought to know."

Mr. Whittredge smiled at the womanly seriousness of the lifted face. "I think you ought, dear," he answered.

With her hand clasped in his he told her the story briefly, for even now he could not dwell upon it without pain, and as Rosalind listened she discovered that she had already heard a bit of it from Mrs. Parton and Mrs. Molesworth at the auction.

"We must try, you and I, not to think too hardly of grandmamma now. She has suffered a great deal, and it was your mother's earnest wish that the trouble might be healed if the opportunity ever came." Patterson said nothing of his own struggle to forgive his mother's attitude toward his young wife.

"I think, father," Rosalind said, "that perhaps grandmamma is sorry. One day, not long ago, I saw her looking at mother's picture. She did not know I was there. She took it from the table and held it in her hand, and I am sure she was crying a little."

That was a happy day, for now they put aside

sad memories, and turned to the merry side of life. Rosalind kept forgetting that her father had been in Friendship before, and continued to point out objects of interest with which he had been familiar long before she was born. So full were the hours that it was growing dusk when they turned into Church Lane to call on the magician.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINTH.

AT THE MAGICIAN'S.

"I would have you."

OVER his work these days the magician often smiled. It seemed to him that the good in things was beginning to show very plainly. The atmosphere of Friendship was clearing; the trouble which had first shown itself when Patterson Whittredge left his home had begun to lift with the coming of his daughter. Not that Rosalind had anything to do with it; it was only one of those bits of poetical justice that go to make life interesting.

An onlooker might have observed that he smiled oftener when engaged on the spinet than at other times; but if the magician had made any more discoveries in connection with it, he kept them to himself.

Now that the days were growing chill, a cheerful fire blazed on his hearth, before which Criss-

cross and Curly Q. dozed; he had found time to renew the motto over the chimney-piece, and the window-shelf was full of plants. The Arden Foresters appeared to regard the place as a club-room for their special benefit, and dropped in at all hours. The magician liked to have them there. As he sandpapered and oiled and polished, it was pleasant to glance in, now and then, at the open door, at a row of bright faces in the chimney-corner.

Once in a while Celia joined them for a few minutes. She wanted to know about the purchaser of the spinet, but Morgan seemed inclined to evade her questions. He did not deny that there was a purchaser, but the name had apparently escaped him.

Belle suggested that it might be the same mysterious individual who had bought the house, and Morgan accepted this as a happy solution when it was mentioned to him.

The cabinet-maker was a very queer person at times.

Celia sat in one corner of the high-backed settle alone this afternoon. Belle, who had come in with the news of the arrival of Rosa-

lind's father the evening before, had just gone, and Celia, who had spent a busy morning, was reflecting that it was too late to begin a new task, and that she might as well allow herself to rest. Of late she had taken life more quietly.

"Morgan seems to have gone out. May I come in?" It was Allan Whittredge who spoke, standing in the door.

"He was there a moment ago," Celia answered, rising.

"May I wait for him here? You agreed we were not to be enemies; can't we go a step farther, and be friends?"

Celia found no reply to this, but she sat down again.

Allan took the arm-chair and faced her. "I seem to be always forcing myself on you, but I'll promise you this is the last time," he said.

Still Celia had nothing to say, but she allowed him a glance of her dark eyes which was not discouraging.

Allan went on: "I am so tired of mistakes and misunderstandings that, before the subject is closed forever between us, I want you to know the exact truth in regard to my feelings.

"When I received your letter putting an end to things, at first I was hurt and angry, and I tried to persuade myself that it was for the best after all. You see, I did not know your side, and you will forgive me if I confess I thought you childish and lacking in deep feeling. Then, two years later, I saw you with the children, coming down the stairs at the Gilpin house, and something made me feel dimly that I had wronged you; but still I could not understand, until some words of Cousin Betty's suddenly made it clear. It was maddening to think what my long silence must have seemed to mean to you. Then, for the first time, I saw the real barrier between us, and the more I thought of it, the more impenetrable it became.

"But it is hard for me to give up. I have looked at it on all sides; I went away that I might think more clearly about it, and of late I have begun to hope. I believe that love worthy of the name lives on in spite of everything, and I have dared to wonder if your love could have weathered this storm; if you still cared, though it might be only enough to give me the chance to win you again." Allan bent

forward in his earnestness, his eyes fixed appealingly upon the small, still figure in the corner of the settle.

"Do you not care at all, Celia?" he asked, after a moment's silence.

Celia lifted her eyes. "Care?" she cried, "I have always cared,—through everything! When I thought you knew and believed the cruel charge against my father; when I knew his heart was broken; when he was dead,—when I wanted to hate you, still I cared. Have you cared like that?"

This vehement confession, with its note of defiance, was bewildering. Allan hesitated before this unapproachable, tempestuous Celia. Then he drew his chair nearer. "Celia, dear heart, do not speak so; I have not been tried like you, but give me the chance and see how I will atone for the past."

Suddenly Celia held out her hand; "Oh, Allan, I am so very bad-tempered. I seem always determined to quarrel," she said, with a laugh that was half a sob.

This was enough, the strain was broken; Allan forsook the arm-chair for the settle.

It was perhaps some fifteen minutes later when he asked Celia if she remembered the magician, and the tiger with three white whiskers. "What a brave little girl you were," he added.

"Little goose," said Celia.

"Does that mean you will no longer follow me blindly?"

She laughed. "What made you think of it?" she asked.

"Rosalind inquired the other day if I was the boy."

"Allan, I don't know why I told the children that story."

"At least it gave me the courage to try my fate."

"I don't think it required much courage."

"You don't know," Allan replied, smiling over her head. "But now, dearest, we are going to begin again and live in a fairy tale and forget all the hard and cruel things. Do you know, I had a vision that day, in the library of the old house? I saw a fire of blazing logs, and you and I sat before it, and we weren't quarrelling."

"Dear old house! I can't bear to look at it now," Celia sighed.

"I am sorry to hear that, for I was planning to live there."

"Allan — you? Wasn't it sold?"

"I bought it through an agent. I thought perhaps I might want to sell again if — if things did not come out as I hoped."

"Even then you were thinking about it?"

"I have thought of nothing else since the day I saw you on the stairs with your arm around Belle."

"How unhappy I was! I did not dream that you still cared. It seems so long ago. Did you know your mother came to see me, Allan?"

"Yes. She has keen eyes; she knew what it meant to me. Poor mother!"

"I thought I could never forgive, but I believe I do now, — not always, — but I shall after a while."

Allan pressed his lips to the hand he held; then, still holding it, he took the little case from his pocket and put the sapphire ring on her finger. "I hope Cousin Betty will be satisfied now," he remarked.

Celia looked down at the quaint old ring. "How much it seems to stand for!" she said.

"Rosalind will be glad," she added. "Do you know, I did not realize how bitter and unhappy I was until I met her one day in the cemetery. Her eyes were so sweet, they made me ashamed."

"She told me about it," Allan answered.

"Not about the rose? Did she see that? Oh, Allan — but I picked it up again and carried it home."

"She long since came to the conclusion that she was mistaken in thinking it was her rose you threw away."

It was growing dark. The magician, who had come in long ago, wisely refrained from interrupting his guests, but went about putting away his tools and smiling to himself. He was just lighting his lamp, when the shop door opened and Rosalind danced in, followed by her father.

"Mr. Pat!" exclaimed the magician. "I heard you were here. I wondered if you wouldn't come to see me;" and he shook hands as if he would never stop, while Rosalind circled around them merrily.

"Mr. Pat was one of my boys," Morgan announced, as if it were a piece of news; adding, "We ought to make some tea."

Rosalind clapped her hands, and nodded emphatically, "Let's!" she cried. "Why, there's Uncle Allan! Where did you come from?"

"I arrived at home a few hours ago and found nobody, so I started out in search of some one. How are you, Patterson?" and the brothers clasped hands warmly.

"We are going to have tea, just as I did that day when I was so lonely, and — here's Miss Celia!" Rosalind paused in surprise.

Celia stood rather shyly in the door. She would gladly have escaped if she could.

At Rosalind's exclamation, Allan drew his brother forward. "You remember Celia Fair, Patterson?" he said.

"Certainly I do. She was about Rosalind's age when I last saw her."

"I remember you very well, Mr. Whittredge," Celia said, as Patterson took both her hands, and looked into her glowing face.

"I haven't been told anything, but —" he glanced inquiringly at Allan, who nodded, smiling.

Rosalind caught sight of the ring on Celia's finger. "Oh," she said, "was that what the will meant? Are you going to wear it always? I

know Aunt Patricia would be glad!" and she hugged Celia joyfully.

That what followed was a childish performance cannot be denied, but alas for those who do not sometimes enjoy putting away grown-up dignity! Rosalind had set her heart on having tea, and the magician was no less pleased at the idea. He lighted up and filled the kettle, and she set the table, while the others looked on and laughed.

"I began being a boy again four months ago, and I like it. How old are you?" Allan asked, passing Celia her cup.

"About six," she answered.

"Then I am ten."

"Then you are too little for me to play with," said Rosalind. "How old are you, father?"

"If Allan is ten I ought to be about sixteen, I suppose."

"Here's to the magician!" cried Allan, and they drank the cabinet-maker's health right merrily.

"I drink to the ring which has come to its own again," said Rosalind's father; and so the fun went on.

Celia forgot her shyness and was a happy little girl once more.

"Let us drink to the Forest and all who have learned its secret," she proposed.

In the midst of it all, Miss Betty walked in.

"Well!" she exclaimed, "I think you might have asked me."

"It isn't too late. This is an impromptu affair in honor of Patterson," said Allan, offering her a chair.

"You have no idea what a noise you are making," she said, greeting the stranger. "I had just come in from a guild meeting, and the unusual illumination and the sounds of hilarity were too much for my curiosity." Here her glance rested in evident surprise upon Celia.

"Celia has something to show you, Cousin Betty," Allan said mercilessly, "and you are not to bother me about it any more."

Miss Betty went around to Celia and kissed her. "It is what I have been hoping all along," she whispered.

CHAPTER THIRTIETH.

OAK LEAVES.

"Bid me farewell."

"I HAVE something to tell you," said Belle, as the Arden Foresters walked up the hill toward the Gilpin place.

"So have I," added Rosalind, "something lovely," and she waved a small package aloft.

"Is it something for us?" Katherine asked.

"Let Belle tell hers first. Mine must wait till we get to the oak tree."

"It is about the ring. I have found out how it came to be in the spinet," Belle announced.

"Really? How?"

"Lucy Brown, Aunt Milly's granddaughter, put it there," she began, all eagerness to tell her news. "Aunt Milly, you know, was Mr. Gilpin's

cook, and Lucy had come in from the country to stay with her a few days, when he was taken ill. The morning he died she found the case with the ring in it under the library table, and she carried it into the drawing-room, where she was dusting, meaning to show it to her grandmother. Just as she had opened the spinet some one called to her to run for Dr. Fair, that Mr. Gilpin was dying, and in a great hurry she pushed the ring case under the strings and closed the lid and forgot all about it. She went home before anybody knew the ring was lost, and never thought of it again till she came to Friendship the other day and our Manda was telling her about the magician's finding it."

"I am almost sorry we know how it happened," said Rosalind. "I liked to think the magician had really broken the spell."

It was the last meeting of the Arden Foresters before Rosalind's departure, and in spite of the wintry day they decided it must be held under the oak tree; and little cared they for the weather as they rustled through the fallen leaves beneath the bare brown trees.

"I believe it is going to snow," said Jack, turning up his collar.

"If you'll stay we'll take you coasting down the Gilpin hill," Maurice added.

"I am afraid if I waited it wouldn't snow," Rosalind answered, laughing. "And now I have something to show you." They had reached the arbor, and sitting down she opened the box she carried.

"You know we have been wondering what we should do for badges when the leaves were gone. Just see what the president has sent!" and she displayed to their delighted gaze five small, enamelled oak leaves.

If Dr. Hollingsworth was sensitive to compliments, his ears must have burned badly about this time. Belle summed them up by remarking, "I just believe he is almost the nicest man I ever knew."

They stood together under the oak tree, and Rosalind pinned on the new badges. "Let's promise to be friends, whatever happens," she said, "because we know the Forest secret and have had such good times this summer."

The sun shone out brightly for a moment as

the wind swept over the hilltop, rattling the vines on Patricia's Arbor; under the autumn sky the winding river sparkled as gayly as when its banks were green; on the far-away stretch of yellow road the wintry sunshine lay; and under the red oak they clasped hands and promised to be friends always.

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